**DIRECTORATE:**

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|  P Private Bag X454, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200  **Provincial Communication** Moses Mabhida Building, 330 Langalibalele Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3200 **Tel**: 033 341 4830 **Fax:** 033 341 0986  |

**REMARKS BY THE PREMIER OF KWAZULU-NATAL, MR THAMSANQA NTULI, ON THE OCCASION OF THE KWAZULU-NATAL CABINET LEKGOTLA HELD AT PUBLIC WORKS IN MAYVILLE 23-07-24**

Members of the Executive Council,

The Director General Dr Nonhlanhla Mkhize

Heads of Department

Councillors, Mayors

Advisors

Senior Government Officials

Members of the Media

**Good morning**

I welcome you all to this crucial meeting of the Executive Council, Mayors, the most senior management of our departments, advisory bodies, and executives of provincial public entities and national state-owned companies.

We meet less than a week after the President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, delivered his maiden opening address of the seventh administration. In his address, he shared a clear and outcomes-oriented Programme of Action.

The President was clear about the three strategic priorities adopted by the Government of National Unity, which act as both an anchor and a compass for this seventh administration’s programme of action.

They are:

* **Firstly, to drive inclusive growth and job creation.**
* **Secondly, to reduce poverty and tackle the high cost of living.**
* **Thirdly, to build a capable, ethical and developmental state.**

As key participants in the National Cabinet Lekgotla that adopted these broad and strategic priorities, I wish to underscore the crucial role our province plays in aligning with the pursuit and attainment of these goals. Your contributions will not only guide our engagements but also shape the resultant programme of action for our provincial government.

Before I delve into the task at hand, I would like to take a moment to express my personal and the Executive Council’s profound gratitude for the exceptional work done by the Technical Lekgotla which sat last week to prepare for this Cabinet Lekgotla and took a deep dive into the state of the province.

Your efforts, under the leadership of the Director-General, Dr Nonhlanhla Mkhize, have been truly outstanding and we are deeply appreciative of your contributions in preparing for this Lekgotla.

Colleagues, while the President outlined the focal areas of the current government’s programme of action, it falls on our shoulders as elected representatives of the people of KwaZulu-Natal, to dovetail the national programme of action into one that will respond to our province's unique

challenges.

We understand these challenges and we are not just committed, but resolute in crafting a programme of action that will fulfil our province's aspirations.

**Enduring Unity**

Therefore, the first task of this provincial Lekgotla is to showcase the unwavering unity of purpose among all the members of the current administration in crafting and implementing the seventh administration’s programme of action, which will emerge from this Lekgotla.

This is an administration made up of various partners, but one bound by the pursuit of a singular goal – to build a KwaZulu-Natal that is fit for our people, one that engenders fresh hope about the future.

Therefore, the eyes of the citizens of our province are correctly trained on this gathering, for they expect us to emerge with a concrete and practical plan to change their lives.

From the CEOs of multinationals to unemployed women in the most remote of villages of our province, there is an expectation that our gathering over the next two days will usher in a change that will transform the socio-economic landscape of our province.

**Rebuilding our Economy**

Our economy has been devastated by the triple challenges of Covid 19, repeated Floods and the civil unrests. Latterly we have been hardest hit by the devastating veld fires that have wreaked havoc in the agricultural sector and claiming lives. This exacerbate the already depressed fiscus and have negative impact on the economy.

As the President highlighted, we have recorded subdued economic growth over the past decade and a half, which means as a nation we have an economy that is constraints in terms of creating jobs.

It is the responsibility of this Lekgotla to make sure that we craft and trajectory that will lift the province out of the economic doldrums and despair, and inspire new hope, and that should be our preoccupation.

We are encouraged that there will be a renewed focus on reviving our rail system, Colleagues this should be the foundation upon which we build economic recovery of the small towns and rural areas, so that we move the heavy cargo off the road and decrease road accidents while saving money on costs national roads repairs caused by heavy load.

Together we have an opportunity to press a reset button and get this province working differently, building on the foundations laid by our former colleagues.

**The Youth Unemployment**

We have met with the young people twice in the last few days to craft a strategy that will get young people working. It is unenviable that we have a cohort of economically active and able young people who are sitting at home.

We must engage on strategies to reduce the youth unemployment, consolidation of a suite of funds so that they are meaningful and impactful and support young people in starting and managing their businesses. This gathering here over the next day must pay attention to that.

**A SMART Programme of Action**

The programme of action which emerges from this Lekgotla must subscribe to the SMART principle.

It must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound. If we outline the programme of action in addressing housing backlogs as an example, such a programme should be able to articulate the extent of the challenge; communicate the solution; express how many houses will be built; at which time and what interdependencies need to be in place for that goal to be achieved.

We must go further and say how we will measure our performance, how we will intervene where we see targets not being met, and what means of consequence management we will invoke in case of non-performance.

Such is the level of detail that our plans should have.

For the longest time, the democratic state has been accused of failure to implement its very progressive policies. Therefore, we must adopt this project management approach so that we can hold each other accountable, and the citizens of our province can also hold us accountable.

**Honesty and Integrity of the Process**

Colleagues, as we deliberate on the direction our province must take over the next two days, we should strive to be honest. We must resist the temptation to reduce this critical session to a box-ticking exercise. We must be frank about our shortcomings and ambitious about finding solutions to address them.

As such, I urge all of us to depict the highest levels of professionalism and be willing to subject ourselves to the counsel and guidance of our peers. We must be frank and robust in our engagements, but we must maintain the decorum of the Executive.

This must be anchored on the principles of ethical, capable and clean governance, that is developmental in its outlook.

**Reliable Data for Decision-Making**

The integrity of the data we share, which determines policy and our strategic direction, must be beyond question. The challenges afflicting our people, including unemployment, poverty and, at times, sluggish service delivery, mean we cannot afford to fiddle while Rome burns.

Therefore, we must appreciate that the information we use as the basis of the programme of action, practically determines our approach and the extent of resources committed to addressing identified challenges. We must act with integrity.

Colleagues, we must embrace fresh ideas. As much as we seek to influence fellow colleagues, we should also allow ourselves to be influenced. As we engage, there will be differences in approach.

These should be embraced because they mean that whatever emerges ultimately will have been scrutinised thoroughly, and any weaknesses will have been addressed. As long as the contradictions are not antagonistic, they propel us forward.

**Building a Government for All Through Coherent Communication**

Colleagues, there are issues that this Lekgotla must tackle, but these issues fall outside of its technical imperatives. One of the questions that should preoccupy us is how we ensure that our government is truly embraced as the government of all the people of our province. Getting all the province’s residents to rally behind our government is crucial because it means that whatever we do will always resonate with our people and will be informed by the aspirations of the citizens of KwaZulu-Natal.

At the centre of this is how we communicate. Our communication must be coherent, but critically it should empower citizens to play their rightful role in the development of our province. We must resource communication. But, our communication must be based on the principles of ubuntu. We should ensure that it is communication that considers the various cultures and traditions of our citizens.

**Building a Safer KwaZulu-Natal**

Secondly, we should strive to create a safer KwaZulu-Natal. The fact that in some quarters, KwaZulu-Natal is regarded as the capital of hitmen, where a person’s life is not valued, should not only embarrass but propel us to seek collective solutions to alter this narrative.

It is because of this reason we have incorporated community safety and liaison under the Office of the Premier because we want to add much needed impetus to the fight against crime.

**The Broken Window Theory**

In doing so, we want to adopt, among a slew of strategies, the broken window theory, which is a tried and tested strategy to fight crime and which also applies to other areas of human endeavour.

Simply put, the theory posits that “visible signs of disorder and misbehaviour in an environment encourage further disorder and misbehaviour, leading to serious crimes. A building with a broken window that has been left unrepaired, gives an impression that no one cares and no one is in charge.”

This means if we do not root out minor crimes, we cannot deal with serious crimes, a situation that gives rise to the current state of rampant lawlessness. In this regard, the enforcement of by-laws at local government level is a must.

Similarly, if we don’t arrive at work on time and if we don’t answer calls and don’t respond to correspondence, we won’t be able to build a winning province. We must be ruthlessly efficient in getting things done and improving the culture of service delivery excellence.

Winning is not in the final attainment of your objective, but it is in the accomplishment of small tasks that leads to the totality of the whole goal.

**Go Back to Basics, But Rethink the Future**

Colleagues, we should recalibrate our strategies to strengthen engagement ties among all the social partners. For example, out of this Lekgotla, we must emerge with the pillars of a strategy to reposition the KwaZulu-Natal Economic Council.

Similarly, we must go back to the basics of planning and execution. As the President said, the National Development Plan (NDP) remains the blueprint for our development.

In the province's context, we will be keen to hear how all the development projects and programmes align with the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (PGDS). Further, we must interrogate whether the PGDS, as it currently stands, is still the best vehicle to drive the province’s economic growth and development agenda or whether it needs a review in response to the changing conditions and new priorities.

**Embrace Disruption**

Colleagues, I subscribe to the notion of disruption. With the advent of the digital age, we have observed how failure to adapt has proven disastrous for once-thriving multinationals.

This means we cannot afford the luxury of basking in past victories as a province but must constantly push the envelope to retain our status as an innovative and leading province.

**Conclusion**

When I was inaugurated as the Premier of our beautiful province, I solemnly told our people that we would serve them. I stand by that undertaking. We must be driven by the desire to serve in all we do. The quality of the outcome of this Lekgotla will be the first test of whether we are serious about serving. We have no time to waste. There is no time for pettiness. Our people have pinned their hopes on us. We dare not disappoint.

As we tackle this task, we must remember that this is our first opportunity to work together as partners in the Seventh Administration. Therefore, how we handle it will most likely determine how serious we are about the lives of the people who placed us here.

**I thank you.**