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**WELCOMING REMARKS BY THE PREMIER OF KWAZULU-NATAL, HONOURABLE THAMI NTULI**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE ENERGY WATER FOOD CLIMATE NEXUS SUMMIT HELD IN DURBAN**

**ON 02 JULY 2024**

Programme Director;

Prof Nokuthula Sibiya-Acting Vice Chancellor of MUT;

Dr Larry Robinson-President of the Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University;

Representatives and Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the provincial government of KwaZulu-Natal and the people of our province, we extend a warm welcome to the delegates and the organisers of this very important Energy-Water-Food-Climate Nexus Summit.

We are quite pleased that when you decided to bring this event to the African continent for the first time in its history, you chose the province of KwaZulu-Natal as the host.

We want to declare, without any hint of arrogance, that you made the correct choice. Apart from its unparalleled beauty, proud history and heritage as well as the warmth of its people, this is a province where globally important moments in history are made.

Similarly, this is one of the provinces that has borne the brunt of violent weather conditions. We are indeed in the eye of the storm.

This summit couldn’t have come at the most opportune moment as we are not only rebuilding from the recent devastations but also implementing our **build-better** strategy anchored on resilient infrastructure and smart approach.

**STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP OF MUT AND FAMU**

We are indeed pleased that the partnership between the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) and the Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) has resulted in this ground-breaking summit that brings together incredible minds and solution driven experts to deliberate on critical issues that will no doubt define the very existence of our planet.

We are quite grateful to the Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nokuthula Sibiya for the stellar work that your institution has performed over the years to create a sense of comfort that indeed Africa and her academic institutions are equal to other universities elsewhere in the world.

We also know that as an institution, you are also inspired by the example of one of Africa’s great statesman, Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, after whom your institution is named.

Programme Director, this summit is not an end on its own but a means to an end. Simply put, the success of this summit should be measured by the material change it brings to the lives of our people in the Province, and the rest of Africa.

It must be anchored on the acceleration of inclusive global economic, social and environmental order that is underpinned by the principles of equality.

With climate change-related impacts on the rise, it is important to implement context-specific solutions based on different levels of interventions to achieve long-term economic, environmental, and social goals.

That is why I am of the view that bringing the Nexus debate from the pure academic sphere into development practice is progressive as it promotes cross-sectoral collaboration and reduces the complexity and incompatibility of current institutional structures. It promotes recognition of sectoral interdependences, which is important for collaboration to tackle climate change and save livelihoods.

Therefore, we have no doubt that the experience of delegates at this Summit and its outcomes will reflect not only the robustness of engagements but will again prove that Africa is a continent where new ideas are spawned, and movements born.

I am optimistic that at the end of this summit we will have practical and creative solutions that will address the water challenges that we face especially in eThekwini Metro, uMkhanyakude and Ugu District Municipalities.

This gathering should bring practical plans to the energy challenges that we have been experiencing as the country whilst discussing and striking a delicate balance between utilization of our resources **(like coal)** while ensuring sustainable development.

**THE NEXUS APPROACH**

While the Nexus approach highlights the interdependence of water, energy, food security and how the changing climate impacts them, it also seeks to identify mutually beneficial responses that are based on understanding the synergies of water, energy, and agricultural policies.

The approach also provides an informed and transparent framework for determining the proper trade-offs and synergies that maintain the integrity and sustainability of ecosystems, which is particularly important now in the face of climate change.

We are grateful to the organisers of this Summit because, even outside of the declaration or the resolutions of this august gathering, they have forced us to interrogate collectively subjects that we have always interfaced with, individually.

Programme Director, last month, our province, not for the first time in recent times, experienced an adverse weather event in six district municipalities, with uThongathi being the hardest hit. The province was hit by a storm that left a trail of destruction in its wake and over R1,3 billion in financial cost.

The mop up operations are currently underway and unfortunately the mistake we make is to count losses only on the basis of lives lost and homes or infrastructure destroyed. Yet, when such events occur it is not only lives and physical infrastructure that get disrupted, but livelihoods as well. It is future earnings that get obliterated and better future for communities that gets derailed.

In Tongaat for example, the nexus that this Summit must aim to amplify, is demonstrated by the fact that farmers, mainly broiler and egg farmers, lamented the fact that the tornado had undermined their ability to produce chickens and eggs. This means that the retailers run out of stock. This may mean that the price of eggs or chicken products rise.

The tornado did not only tamper with food supply, but also disrupted energy supply. Life, as we know it, has changed irretrievably for some of the residents of Tongaat, particularly those who lost their loved ones.

The havoc wreaked by the floods in 2019; 2021 and 2022 in our province is still vivid in the minds of our people. Conservative estimates put the cost of the 2017 floods at R576 million; the 2019 floods at R1.8 billion and the 2022 floods at more than R7.5 billion for roads and housing alone. But we also appreciate that other socio-economic pillars were also adversely impacted.

It is because of the appreciation of the interconnectedness of the four themes of this Summit and the quest to seek long-lasting solutions to the challenges identified that we also subscribe to the nine thematic tracks of this Summit which are: **food supply; water quality; zero greenhouse gas emissions; microbial systems and bioinformatics; achievement of soil carbon goals; artificial intelligence-driven circular economy; harnessing of bio**

**data; climate resilient agriculture and allowing new science enterprise to lead the way.**

We subscribe to these tracks because, in the main they resonate with the province’s Climate Change Strategy.

**IMPLEMENTING KZN CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY**

The KwaZulu Natal Climate Change Strategy of 2023 covers 11 economic sectors including Water Resources, Energy & Agriculture& Food Security. The implementation plan of the Strategy contains programmes that various sectors, namely public, private and others are required to implement in order to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The strategy has created a platform for sectors to collaborate and synergize on the design and implementation of initiatives that address some of the key challenges such as the conservation of water resources, introduction of renewable and sustainable energy options, and agricultural innovation to ensure stable food security.

While climate change cannot be reversed, the severity of its impacts on human lives and infrastructure can be reduced through the implementation of relevant programmes that reduce the emission of greenhouse gases and create resilience for communities.

Some of the sectoral initiatives that have been put in place to respond to climate change in order to improve the resilience of vulnerable citizens of KZN include:

* Improvement of Land Management through invasive alien plant management, erosion control and switching to more resilient crop and livestock production systems (climate-smart agricultural practices).
* Promotion and mainstreaming of Conservation Agriculture.
* Strengthening water conservation, water demand management and water resources management
* Diversification of KZN’s water supply sources
* Promotion of sustainable agricultural water use management, which includes diversification of crops and use of water harvesting mechanisms.
* Support the transition to sustainable and decentralized energy generation in the province
* Cutting across all of these are finances, research education, communication and other means of ensuring implementation.

Some of the climate change response programmes that the Province is implementing, which are relevant to this Nexus engagement include

* the Transformative River Management Programme (TRMP), which focuses on improving the integrity and health of river systems to ensure water security.
* The Green and Smart Municipality programme promotes the shift towards renewable energy through installation of solar panels on municipal buildings and streetlights, is currently being implemented in Harry Gwala and Ugu Ditrict Municipalities.

While KZN is making good strides in the implementation of policy and related programmatic actions to mitigate climate impacts and improve the adaptive capacity of its citizens, there is a significant opportunity and role for public and private sector collaboration to deliver relevant solutions that ultimately enable the province to achieve an energy transition that is just and improves the climate resilience of communities.

**CONCLUSION**

This Summit should, while showcasing the latest innovations to address the worst effects of the nexus of energy, water, food and climate challenges, at the same time it must seek to come up with solutions to the current challenges.

As such, we urge the Mangosuthu University of Technology and sister universities to preoccupy themselves with seeking solutions that take into account the challenges facing our people.

In closing, I welcome all of you here today and wish this Summit all the best. We commit that, as the government of KwaZulu-Natal, we look forward to its outcomes, understanding that what will emerge, will propel us to greater heights.

I thank you.