

CLOSING COMMENTS BY HONOURABLE PREMIER SENZO MCHUNU TO THE KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT LEKGOTLA ON 20 FEBRUARY 2015

Fellow Executive Council members,
District Mayors,
Colleagues.

On behalf of the Provincial Executive Council, I extend to all of you my gratitude for the commitment you have demonstrated over the last three days of our Lekgotla. The level of discipline we have exercised is testimony that we are fully seized with the tasks and responsibility thrust on our shoulders, which is to govern this Province in service of the people we represent.

On Wednesday the 18th we congregated here to deliberate on the course of action for the coming year. We agreed as a point of departure that we can no longer claim that we are still figuring out what needs to be done. In this regard, over the last three days we received presentations by clusters, which not only apprised us of the state of our Province but pointed us to exact areas of where the system is broken, where it is working and needing improvements, and where it needs consolidation.

In this regard, our deliberations covered all facets of the state of our Province, and considered a range of interventions we felt need to be implemented to take it forward. Some of the policy decisions and programmes we have adopted, are not only limited to the year ahead, but will shape the course of history for many years to come. Judging from the resolutions we have passed, it is clear that KwaZulu-Natal has what it takes to be number one province in the country. All it takes is vision, hard work, discipline and unity of purpose.

Of particular importance, is the goodwill shown by our social partners in driving shared growth and development of this Province. We thank members of the media who attended the opening of this Lekgotla and through them, we communicated to the public our seriousness to take this Province forward. We thank business partners who came here to engage us in a very frank manner on what we need to do as government, and they committed themselves to do their part in support of our interventions meant to facilitate economic development. We thank colleagues from State Owned Enterprises and National Departments, who also took part in this Lekgotla to share on their programmes whose footprint have a direct bearing to what we seek to achieve.

After all is said and done, KwaZulu-Natal is unique with endless opportunities. Thus the state of our Province is a contrast of extreme social challenges and underperformance in unlocking its true potential. From all cluster presentations, the future looks bright on the horizon.

It is possible to eradicate poverty by 2030. It is possible to eradicate poverty in our lifetime. A country like China made this giant leap in development over a period of just one generation starting from 1978. If you look closely at how they managed to do this, it is clear the state is the single most critical player to either cause a country to develop or stay in a permanent state of under-development. They managed to structure closer relations between government, academic institutions and business on strategy for development as a feature of

any successful development agenda in the 21st Century. The nexus between commerce and development requires that government, academic institutions and business work closely as development partners.

We make no qualms in benchmarking with other successful countries as we have done with Operation Phakisa and the labs we seem to be using effectively to consolidate our interventions. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that no country will grow by copying other country's experience as is. But one can draw from such experiences and incorporate them into ones' own heritage and condition.

Various presentations also pointed us to the fact that we are confronted by serious challenges that are compounded by certain structural constraints like instability in energy supply, lack of connectivity as far as ICT is concerned, and regulatory red-tape. This means we need to deal with such in order to build economic development and eradicate poverty. However, reforms cannot be implemented overnight, as wholesale change that is rapid requires careful thinking, design and execution.

We need to agree that in dealing with current state of the Province, long-term planning is critical if we are to realise grand scale development. However, one cannot do realistic plans if there are no accompanying resources. With the reality of constrained resources facing us, we need to find innovative ways to move forward, whilst curbing losses we incur through wasteful expenditure and corruption.

Our narrative as we move to implement the Provincial Growth and Development Plan, which we have agreed in this Lekgotla that it must be centred on the Poverty Eradication Master Plan, is to dispense dignity to our people. Whereas our Vision 2030 is to be “a prosperous Province, with healthy, secure and skilled people, acting as a gateway to Africa and the world”, the journey to achieving this starts now.

Thank you!