

Address by the Deputy Minister of Public Works, Mr Ntopile Kganyago, MP on the occasion of the sod-turning ceremony for the construction of the Tourism Interpretation Centre

Date: 15 June 2008

Venue: June 16 Memorial Acre, Soweto

Programme Director

MEC for Public Transport, Roads and Works in Gauteng, Mr Ignatius Jacobs

Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, Mr Amos Masondo

Councillors

Honourable Guests

Ladies and Gentleman

It is always a poignant time for all of us in South Africa when Youth Day is celebrated. It is always a time that casts our memory back to the heroic struggles that were waged by the youth of our country that prove to be a catalyst for the final push to our freedom in 1994. We always look back with great pride for the sacrifice of the 1976 generation of youth leaders.

It is therefore a great honour for us to be invited to this function today, which will provide a centre where visitors to our country can learn in details of the events leading up to and during those difficult times when the youth said enough is enough, this far and no further, we will no longer tolerate oppression. We are all grateful for this initiative as it will help to contextualize our struggle history and interpret it for foreign visitors, especially.

This year, government has called for the youth of our country to actively participate in further entrenching democracy, social cohesion and the values that are enshrined in our Constitution as well as to push the boundaries of the progress achieved in the 14 years of our democracy. As the President has exhorted all of us to adopt an unusual approach to our works. Now is the time to speed up change and ensure that young people become our leaders of tomorrow. The youth of today must clearly show us that indeed our country will be left in safe hands when we hand over the batons of leadership as we go into the sunset like all humanity. As we remember and celebrate the efforts of young people of our country in 1976, the youth of today must work hard and unite to lead the fight against xenophobia. We know that the young people who left our country in 1976 were accommodated in other African countries, especially the Frontline states. We therefore cannot afford to be anti fellow Africans. As future leaders, young people must work tirelessly to rid our country and the continent of racism, xenophobia and all unnecessary hatred towards people from other countries.

As the Department of Public Works, both nationally and provincially as well as at local level, we are determined to escalate our efforts at providing young people with training, skills and opportunities of employment. We are all aware that unemployment and lack of

skills is proving to be our greatest headache as government. But we are not sitting back. Our development programmes like the Expanded Public Works Programme, the National Youth Service and Vuk'uphile are all aimed at providing young people with skills so that they can create their own work opportunities as entrepreneurs or skilled artisans. We urge the youth to seize all the opportunities that are being made available to them and use them wisely. Public-private partnerships like that that we have with the Business Trust providing technical support to our EPWP will go a long way in fighting the scourge of poverty and skills deficit.

We therefore would like to reiterate what the president has said: All Hands on Deck, let us all work harder for a brighter future for our country.

I thank you.