

Keynote Address by the Deputy Minister of Public Works, Mr Ntopile Kganyago, Mpumalanga NYS Graduation Ceremony

Venue: Crocodile Country Inn, Nelspruit, Mpumalanga

Date: 21 November 2008

Programme Director

MEC for Public Works in Mpumalanga, Madala Masuku

Executive Mayors Present

Amakhosi

Councilors

Representatives from the Building Industry

Officials of government departments

Ladies and gentleman

I would like to start off by greeting the five hundred and seven learners who have successfully completed their training on this programme in these last twelve months. I want to congratulate you on your success and I want to tell you that you are the embodiment of all that we wish for our people in this country: the ability to access job opportunities as well as being fully trained in useful skills.

Programme Director, it is a great honour for me to be invited to this important function, as it is the first graduation ceremony in this province for the NYS learners. This ceremony gives us insight into what is being achieved through diligent commitment by provinces like Mpumalanga. We were here last year in July, at a picturesque town of Pilgrim's Rest, where we launched the NYS programme in this province. So, it is greatly heartening today to come back and realize that the province has indeed made great strides in fulfilling the

government's social contract with our people: providing opportunities for a better life for all.

The successful implementation of the National Youth Service, just like all government programmes can only be achieved through partnerships between all spheres of government as well as the private sector and communities concerned. I see that the NYS, just like its mother programme the EPWP, is a joint venture in this Province. I see there are contributions from Umsobomvu Youth Fund, the District Municipalities, and the Department of Labour. I want to congratulate you all on this partnership. This is what our country needs if we are to successfully tackle the challenge of underdevelopment, poverty and lack of skills.

A lot of effort is being put in ensuring that the EPWP is massified for maximum impact on the lives of poor people in our country. All the sectors and sub-programmes of the of the EPWP, like the NYS, are being stepped up a gear to ensure that by the end of this first phase in next year, one comma five million job opportunities would have been created. Right now, we are on one comma three. This is htree hundred thousand job opportunities above the target of one million, which was attained in April this year. Indeed, we do aim to add value to the lives of as many people as possible in the sectors of the EPWP.

This graduation ceremony is a highlight of the last 12 months intensive classroom and on-the-job training for the graduands. We want to congratulate them for a job well done. You have contributed to the maintenance of the province's public buildings while at the same time you have improved your own skills base as well as opening vistas to better life opportunities. You now can use your newly-acquired skills to access job opportunities and income generation.

We note with great pride that Mpumalanga is proving to be one of the more active participants in this programme and other EPWP sub-programmes. For example the Vuk'uphile programme, which is our two year training programme

for emerging contractors, is very much alive in this province. Vuk'uphile is an integral part of the Expanded Public Works Programme as it is designed to build capacity among emerging contractors, thus equipping learners with skills required to deliver EPWP infrastructure building projects. In doing so Vuk'uphile is helping to fulfill the EPWP's objectives of creating temporary work opportunities for the unemployed and the skilling of those workers for long-term job prospects.

MEC Masuku, we would like to congratulate your Department for the diligence and commitment that it has shown to the NYS . I am told that significant milestones have been achieved in the history of the programme like the fact that 815 young people in this province have benefited from the NYS with 500 completing this programme. It looks like a real system is already on the go whereby recruits are at different stages of the implementation process, with some in the recruiting process whilst others are training or getting ready for service whilst these trailblazers are already exiting the formal programme. This is diligence personified. Congratulations are really in order here.

Labour-intensive methodologies are the cornerstone of all Public Works Programmes that have been undertaken, not just here in our country, but world-wide. It is my hope that the National Youth Service will fulfil our major aim, which is fight our biggest enemy: the inability of millions to access work. It is my hope that all the efforts that are being undertaken will enable us to scale up our labour-intensive programmes across the board. They must also enable us to expand partnerships for infrastructure development, job creation and the development of our human capital.

Government's commitment to the EPWP is underpinned by budget allocations that prescribe the objectives of labour intensity and skills development as central to the delivery of infrastructure, social and economic services. The EPWP budget to launch phase two has been topped with R4 billion in order to ensure that it is deepened and expanded much more in the next five years. Of course this means that the NYS will be scaled up as well.

We continue to draw on the ongoing support of the Department of Labour, which plays a critical role in the EPWP by providing all the training in the programmes, either directly, or through the various Sector Education and Training Authorities that have been established. Our experience shows that skills development is a key component in the effective and efficient use of labour intensive technologies and that continued emphasis should be placed on training. With the support of the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB), a series of practical manuals have been developed to support the design, implementation and training in labour intensive construction methods. I am pleased to note that these have gained considerable international use, enabling South Africa to contribute to job creation in many parts of the world.

Ladies and gentlemen

Public works programmes are an important initiative in South Africa, but also around Africa and the world. They are geared at alleviating unemployment, and at creating a foothold in the economy for the marginalized, unskilled and unemployed. I would like to urge Municipalities and other spheres of government not to neglect the other components of the EPWP as they can be a great source of poverty alleviation and providing jobs. We need to forever think of ways to improve our through put.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Business sector, who through, the Business Trust continue to support in this instance, Absa bank for continued support for our endeavours as government. What has been achieved so far demonstrate your commitment to the development of our country as well as the true value of partnerships and what they can achieve if pursued vigorously.

I understand that the province is planning to deploy one thousand participants this year in the NYS in a variety of activities. It is also my understanding that the scope of the work is being really expanded, including land scaping and air conditioning and refrigeration training. Now that is breaking new ground and really forward thinking. I would like to once again congratulate this Province for its diligent implementation of the Programmes of the EPWP, including the NYS. It is showing the way for other Provinces and public entities that the EPWP programme is national framework to be implemented by all public entities so as to achieve developmental outcomes in reducing unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment. Well done Mpumalanga, Well done NYS.

I wish you well in your future endeavours.

Thank you.