

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS, MR  
NTOPILE KGANYAGO, MP, ADDRESSES THE  
LEARNERS ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION  
OF THE NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION WEEK ACTIVITIES

VENUE: ORANGE FARM, GAUTENG

DATE: 02 AUGUST 2006

## SALUTATIONS

Let me take this opportunity to thank everybody who has been part of coordinating this visit today. It is indeed an extra-ordinary occasion because the event marks the celebration of the maiden campaign to highlight the role of the construction industry in reconstruction and development.

The National Construction Week is the brainchild of the Department of Public Works and was conceived on behalf of government in recognition of the value the industry was adding to the social and economic life of the country. It is a coordinated campaign designed to mobilize the awareness of the civil society at large behind the construction industry and its products and services.

To appreciate how important this industry is, I invite all of you to close your eyes and imagine the world without any buildings, structures or roads. The house you live in, the school you attend, the road you travel on, the shopping mall you frequently visit, the hospitals, libraries, prisons, churches, clinics, sports fields, hotels, bridges, dams, bus & taxi terminals, airports, railways, military basis and even dance halls, are all the products of the construction industry.

In reality it is difficult to imagine the world without the influence of the construction industry no matter how rural the place might be. Even the simple African huts that are dotting the rural landscape and other hinterlands are full of symbolism and historical significance because they denote nationality and point to a certain historical epoch in the evolution of the African built environment. Did you know that a kraal for most African people is more than just a structure? It is also a shrine – a divine place from where community-safeguarding rituals are performed in high awe and respect and yet the structure of the kraal is the product of the construction activity.

Since time primordial human being as organisms of evolution have had the inherent need for shelter. Endowed with the best brains, they developed ideas around what type of dwellings were appropriate to shield them from natural elements such as the weather patterns and other hazards including wild animals, enemies and vagrants. Even then the activity was labour-intensive and depended on the availability of whatever scanty resources. The presence of Forests, rocks, animal skins, water and other necessities determined the permanence of the human settlements. Over time these settlements became sophisticated and their built environment standards developed and the construction industry became part of the civilization as evidenced by the pyramids of ancient Egypt, the shrines of the Central American Inca people, the stone buildings of the African kingdoms of Mali and Zimbabwe.

In modern world construction and its branches such as engineering, architecture, quantity surveying, project management, town planning have become specialized and adapted for global competitiveness. And South Africa as a developing country caught in the unfolding global forces has had to learn to compete by developing its own construction

capacities and competencies because if we did not, the world around us would and we would become indebted to the outsiders at the expense of developing our own pride, identity and style. As a result we are today appealing to our learners to primarily appreciate the value of this industry but importantly try to identify career opportunities in the industry. There are professional choices such as the fields listed above or one could choose to follow artisan trades such as carpentry, plumbing, joinery and others. Even better, with the trade background, you can pursue business management training to become entrepreneurs and manage own companies where you employ others instead of being employed yourself. The sky is indeed the limit as opportunities are endless.

The South African government has been working very closely with the business world to grow the economy and create a better life for all. The construction industry was identified as one of the foremost industries in helping government achieve its goals of providing the people with houses, roads, water, sanitation but also other essential public infrastructure including police stations, justice courts, multi-purpose community centres etc. With the 2010

approaching and South Africa entrusted the opportunity to host a Soccer World Cup tournament, the county will require stadiums, hotels, more and improved roads. With 2010 gone, these facilities will remain as an investment in the country for the continued use by yourself and your children once you have finished education to join the communities as professionals and other specialists.

We believe that with all the experiences this morning, your mind is already racing to identify a niche for yourself in this sector. As government we appreciate your determination and call on our youth to take interest in the building of their country. One way to help government fight poverty is for many of you to vow not to fall into the same poverty trap that our parents find themselves in mainly due to no fault of their own. This country was once ravaged by the demon of apartheid where your parents despite their ambitions were not allowed to rise above certain degree in life. Apartheid decided that they should stay in poor areas and attend poor schools where they were given poor education.

Many parents resisted and were jailed or killed by the apartheid police. Those who survived became dedicated

working class and literally helped build the foundations for the prosperity of this country. Do not disappoint your parents. Avoid letting your country down by failing to finish your education. Stay away from drugs, crime and premarital sex. Again this industry working with government has launched the HIV/AIDS strategy for the industry to promote healthy and responsible lifestyle among the participants. On the subject of drugs, I want to recall the words of one African American civil right champion, Reverend Jesse Jackson, who said that as leaders we ought to be ***“putting hope in your brains instead of injecting dope in your veins.”***

I hope you learnt something from this campaign and want to see you as the National Construction Week Ambassadors in the coming years. Go out and show the world that you are literally laying foundations for the building of a prosperous South Africa. Repeat this message to yourself that ***“come 2010, I want to be there, making a difference”***.

I THANK YOU.