

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR J.L (JABU) MAHLANGU, MPL DURING A DEBATE ON THE 2010 STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS AT THE MPUMALANGA LEGISLATURE CHAMBER, RIVERSIDE, MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.

Tuesday, 23 February 2010

Honourable Speaker;

Honourable Premier;

Colleagues in the Executive Council;

Honourable Members of the Provincial Legislature;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good Afternoon!

As the month which heralded our freedom 20 years ago; the month which saw *Madiba* walking out of prison as a free-man 20 years ago, draws to a close, may I start this debate by borrowing his words when he addressed the Houses of Parliament on 24 May 1994, as the first democratically elected President of the Republic of South Africa, and I quote:

“Our road to (the) glorious future lies through collective hard work, to accomplish the objective of creating a people-centred society.”

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, our unwavering commitment towards realising *Madiba's* dream, is summed up by the five (5) priority delivery areas identified by our caring ANC-led government. I say the ANC-led government because as pioneers of a better life for all our people irrespective of political affiliation, colour or creed, we continue to develop policies which put all *batho-pele*.

Like the Honourable Premier indicated when delivering the *State of the Province Address* last Friday, as undisputable champions of positive change, and I quote:

“We wish to reaffirm our commitment to the contract that we entered into with our people – a contract articulated very clearly in the 2009 ANC Manifesto..... We remain committed towards speeding up economic growth that creates decent work and sustainable livelihood for our people in the Province, particularly the poor and the working class.”

We have not and will never deviate from achieving *Madiba’s* dream – a dream that one day all our people, especially those who cannot fend for themselves, will go to bed on a full stomach. This is a dream of our caring movement represented by government; it is our people’s aspiration, which we agreed to continue to pursue when we extended our contract with them last year; and we dare not fall short on that commitment.

Honourable Speaker, by many accounts the worst may be over, as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts a global economic growth of over 3 per cent for 2010. We expect South Africa’s economy to grow by 2.3 per cent for 2010, rising to 3.6 per cent by 2012. Acknowledging that a lot of people were being laid-off due to the shrunken economy, we continued to seek ways to ease the impact of the economic recession especially on the hardest hit – the poor people of our province. This saw us successfully hosting a two (2) day Provincial Economic Summit in October last year, at which a number of interventions were agreed upon.

Amongst others, all stakeholders comprising business, labour, civil society and government agreed that a university for Mpumalanga should be established. Like the Premier indicated in the *State of the Province*, the university will assist in developing the scarce skills required to propel economic growth.

The proposed University will develop skills in engineering, science, research, agriculture, just to mention a few. We also agreed that there is a need to upgrade our major hospitals and also establish a tertiary hospital for the province. This will ensure that our people receive immediate high quality medical care, thus reducing the traffic to Gauteng and cutting costs associated with transportation of patients. What is also important is that the financial benefit to the economy will remain within our province.

Stakeholders further agreed that our roads, including the coal haulage route, need urgent maintenance, as roads are the backbone of a thriving economy. An agreement was also reached that the province requires an International Convention Centre, to be able to attract big conventions, both domestic and international, which will in turn increase the tourism spend in our province. We are quite certain that such a facility would benefit us, given the tourism attractions advantage we have.

The implementation of the Comprehensive Rural Development Strategy in our province is a sign of our commitment towards poverty eradication, ensuring food security and sustainable livelihood for all. In the same spirit, we will continue to encourage people to go back to *emasimini* through the *Masibuyel'emasimini* intervention project. We re-commit that we will continue to put more resources to fulfil this promise – a commitment of ensuring that **no one goes to bed on an empty stomach.**

Furthermore, we will continue to pump more funding to improve and upgrade our socio-economic infrastructure to ensure provision of **quality health care for all**; and that **the doors of learning and cultures are opened** to all. This includes the continual upgrading and revitalisation of our hospitals; construction of schools and roads. We nonetheless will continue to rehabilitate them.

The provision of habitable houses to our people remains at the top of our priority list, as we strive to **build cohesive and sustainable communities**. It is our intention, which we will never compromise on, to make sure that every person has a roof over their head.

Honourable Speaker, our commitment towards **intensifying the fight against crime and corruption** speaks for itself. We will leave no stone unturned to erode corruption in government and deal harshly with criminals, as there is no place for such people in our communities. Through the billion Rands investment we made in preparing to host the world during the upcoming 2010 FIFA World Cup, our intention is to cash-in in the economic spin-offs associated with it, thereby also ensuring that it leaves a proud legacy that our children and our communities will enjoy for many years to come.

In 107 days, we will host the world during FIFA World Cup games. Our province will also play host to some of the games. We can confirm that we are ready to deliver the best ever international soccer showpiece; the intension being, to convince FIFA to consider us in the future. Given the economic spin-offs associated with the event, we implore on our people not to out-market themselves by charging unrealistic exorbitant amounts for their goods and services. We need to show the world that we are honest people, for them to consider coming back to our country, particularly to our province.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, when President Jacob Zuma delivered the State of the Nation Address on 11 February earlier this month, he declared this year, the year of action. As the Executive of this administration, we are more than ready to ensure that the implementers of our policies do not derail us from the instruction given by the President and echoed by the Premier. We will not tolerate laziness – people serving our people as if they are doing them a favour.

We will ensure that those who do not want to tow the line, are replaced by those who are determined to serve with passion.

No one will therefore, derail us from ensuring a better life for all our people; we stand firm on our commitment to build a developmental state, which according to President Zuma, *“responds (faster) to the needs and aspirations of the people.”*

As I close, like *Madiba* taught us, we believe that working together with interested stakeholders, will enable us to continue on *“our road to (the) glorious future...”* It is the glorious future, which gave rise to the formation of our caring movement in 1912. The birth of the ANC 98 years ago, was based on a dream to unshackle our people from the bondages of poverty, which was brought about by the devious apartheid system. We have always had a vision that one day, we will be free, and it is our government’s unwavering intention to continue to lead our people on a road to the glorious future.

I leave you with an inspiring excerpt from Madiba’s State of the Nation Address of 06 February 1998, and I quote:

“.....South Africans.....are filled with hope about the bright future that beckons. They shall not be distracted by the noise of a falling tree amidst the dignified silence of a new future starting to blossom!”

It has blossomed, and our people are continuing to enjoy its sweet fruits!

I thank you!