

REMARKS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, HON SE KHOLWANE DURING THE OPENING OF THE REFURBISHED LABOUR CENTRE AT CAROLINE

10 DECEMBER 2015

- **Minister of Labour, Hon Mildred Oliphant**
- **Deputy Minister of Labour, iNkosi Hon Pathekile Holomisa**
- **Executive Mayor of Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality, Cllr BP Shiba**
- **Councilors present**
- **Senior Officials representing all three spheres of government**
- **Representatives of the Labour Federations and Business**
- **Ladies and gentlemen**



1. I would also like to take this opportunity to convey the best wishes of our Premier, Honourable DD Mabuza to the ministry and all stakeholders present here today.
2. The Honourable Premier requested that I convey his appreciation to the Ministry of Labour for responding to the needs for improvement of this Labour centre.
3. Chief Albert Luthuli is one of the most **poverty-stricken municipalities** in our Province.
4. It is home to **186 thousand citizens**, majority being young people below the age of 35.
5. The municipal area has one of the **highest poverty rates at 40 percent** which is made worse by **high unemployment** amongst the economically active population.
6. This prompted the Provincial Government to prioritise it under the **Comprehensive Rural Development Programme** a few years ago.



7. The ANC-government has never shied away from the responsibility of tackling all challenges that confront our people.
8. We pledged to walk with and along our people towards the realization of a self-sustaining and inclusive society;
 - a. Where those in need can also live in decent homes; where clean drinking water is available to all;
 - b. Where our children receive quality and free education;
 - c. Where quality and free health services for women and children as pledged in the Freedom Charter is a protected human right, and
 - d. Where all people enjoy a crime free environment, amongst others.
9. To this end, the Provincial Government has adopted a delivery coordinating model, referred to as **Operation Vuka Sisebente** earlier this year.
10. The model introduces a new approach of increased interaction and communication at the grassroots level, with

the aim of **building consensus and ensuring collective resolution of the service delivery challenges** within the communities.

11. We adopted this approach because the African National Congress taught us that **power belongs to the people**, hence the renewal of our ties with all sectors and stakeholders, under the leadership of the ward councilors, to resolve locally-based service delivery challenges.

Workers' struggles and government

12. As we all know, Hon Minister, most of the vulnerable workers are found on the farms, at our homes (domestic workers), retail stores and at the mines.
13. And the current global and national economic environment is not helping the situation of the vulnerable workers either.
14. It is against this background that the Provincial Government welcomes the recently concluded agreement between EVRAZ Highveld Steel & Vanadium, its trade unions and the



government to postpone the retrenchment of workers in Emalahleni Municipality.

15. This agreement ensured that the workers do not lose their jobs, are trained to improve their skills, and receive a percentage of their pay for six months while the company's main plant is under care and maintenance.
16. It is against the same background that the Honourable Premier, Mr DD Mabuza appointed a commission to investigate the conditions in which the farm workers/dwellers work / live.
17. The commission has started its work and we hope it will provide clear guidance on how the Provincial Government should intervene to **restore the dignity and human rights** of the farm workers and dwellers.

Programme Director,

18. It is an open secret that the majority of workers in South Africa are not unionized.

19. As a result, these workers don't enjoy the right to freedom of association even at the time we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the founding prescripts of human rights in South Africa - the Freedom Charter.
20. There is therefore a need for the state, working together with organized labour, to continue protecting the rights of both unionized and un-unionized workers within the context of applicable legislation.
21. To this end, we welcome the proclamation of sectoral minimum wages which are aimed at protecting the vulnerable workers in various sectors of the economy.
22. The acceptance of such interventions bear testimony that the service of your department, Honourable Minister is highly needed and appreciated especially in our Province which is mostly rural in nature.

Infrastructure delivery

23. It is for these reasons, Honourable Minister and Deputy Minister, that we welcome the reopening of this Labour Centre; and offer our continued support to the Ministry and the officials who we expect to provide an improved quality of services to our people.

24. We are confident that the people of Carolina and the surrounding areas will appreciate what the Department has done for them, as much as we do.

25. With those few word let me once again thank the Ministry for your commitment to improving the working conditions of all workers in South Africa.

26. I thank You