



STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS **#KZNSOPA2024**

WEDNESDAY
28 FEB
OVAL CRICKET STADIUM • PMB

BY THE HONOURABLE
MS NOMUSA DUBE-NCUBE
PREMIER OF KWAZULU-NATAL










KWAZULU-NATAL
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**GROWING
KWAZULU-NATAL
TOGETHER**

8 KWAZULU-NATAL GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

-  1 Basic Services
-  2 Job Creation
-  3 Growing the Economy
-  4 Growing SMMEs and Cooperative
-  5 Education and Skills Development
-  6 Human Settlement and sustainable livelihood
-  7 Build a Peaceful Province
-  8 Build a caring and incorruptible government



**GROWING
KWAZULU-NATAL
TOGETHER**



#LeaveNoOneBehind

2024 STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY PREMIER OF KWAZULU-NATAL HONOURABLE NOMUSA DUBE-NCUBE, MPL ON 28 FEBRUARY 2024

His Majesty, Hlanga Lomhlabathi, Ndlulamithi Ephahlwe Ngamalanga Amabili;
Speaker of KwaZulu-Natal Legislature, Hon N.N. Boyce
Premier of Gauteng, Mr P. Lesufi

Members of the Provincial Executive Council

Former Premiers of KwaZulu-Natal Province and Spouses

- Hon Mr T.W. Mchunu,
- Hon Dr Z.L. Mkhize
- Hon S.J. Ndebele

Deputy Minister for Finance, Mr D. Masondo

Deputy Minister for Health, Dr S.M. Dhlomo

Deputy Minister in the Presidency, Mr K. Morolong

Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon S.L. Tsenoli

Chief Whip of the Majority Party, Hon J Nxumalo

Deputy Speaker of KwaZulu-Natal Legislature, Hon R.T. Mthembu

Deputy Speaker of Free State Legislature, Hon L. Mapena

Members of Diplomatic Corps

Members of the National Council of Provinces

Members of KwaZulu-Natal Legislature

Judge President of KwaZulu-Natal, Judge Poyo-Dlwati

Mayor of eThekweni Metro, Cllr T.M. Kaunda

Mayor of uMgungundlovu District Municipality, Cllr M. Zuma

Mayor of Msunduzi Local Municipality, Cllr M. Thebolla

Mayors present and Councillors

Queen Mother MaNdllovu

Abantwana baseNdlunkulu

Chairperson of Provincial House of Traditional & Koi-San Leaders, Inkosi R.S. Shinga
and all Amakhosi Present

Director-General of KwaZulu-Natal Province, Dr Nonhlanhla O. Mkhize

Provincial Commissioner, Lt. General N. Mkhwanazi

Political Formations

Provincial Planning Commission

Heads of Department, CEOs of Entities and Senior Government Officials

Families of Stalwarts

Labour Unions

Civil Society

Faith-Based Organisations

Business Fraternity

Government Beneficiaries

Media Houses present

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen



Ms Nomusa Dube-Ncube
PREMIER OF KWAZULU-NATAL

INTRODUCTION AND SCENE-SETTING

1. **Honourable Speaker**, 18 months ago, I stood before Judge President of the KwaZulu-Natal Division Justice Mjabuliseni Isaac Madondo to take an oath of office and to publicly accept the task bestowed on me by the African National Congress (ANC) and the people of our province to occupy the highest office in our province, the Office of the Premier as the first woman Premier. This I did knowing that I represent the aspirations of many women, young and old from the townships of KwaMashu to uMkhanyakude, wherein in 1996 the community that had access to electricity was 46% and today stands at over 97%; water provision now stands at 85% of households in KwaZulu-Natal have access to piped tap water.

2. It is an oath that I did not, and still do not take lightly, for it was an acceptance of the responsibility to transform into reality the hopes and aspirations of millions of our people who yearn for a free, united, peaceful, and prosperous KwaZulu-Natal. In me many of these community members saw the reality that said indeed the ANC government is serious about the country, a province that is non-racial, non-sexist. It was possible that even if you are a child who went to school in KwaMaphumulo, you can become a pilot, because with the ANC in government, the sky is not the limit for our young people in a country that is alive to possibilities. Examples are:

- a) Sanele Mkhize, a young man who benefited through our programme, is now working as a pilot for Qatar Airways.
- b) Lethabo Vacu and Tony Tsonope, a couple trained by Fuze Institute, are now pilots for FlySafair;
- c) Sinethemba Ngwane is an instructor for Fly Fofa Airways which is a flying school and an aircraft charter service;
- d) Kholeka Ndlangamandla and Talent Vilakazi who are flying drones for a commercial farmer in Nelspruit.

3. **Honourable Speaker**, since the democratic breakthrough of 1994, successive Premiers have stood before judges to take this oath of honour and dedication to service the people of KwaZulu-Natal.

4. **Between 1994 and 2004**, the late Premiers Hon Dr Frank Mdlalose, Hon Dr Ben Ngubane and Hon Dr Lionel Mtshali took this oath.

5. **From 2004 Premiers from the ANC**, His Excellency Ambassador Sibusiso Ndebele; Hon Dr Zweli Mkhize; Hon Mr Senzo Mchunu; Hon Mr Willies Mchunu and my immediate predecessor Hon Mr Sihle Zikalala, also affirmed their loyalty to the principles enshrined in our Constitution and committed to serve our people to the best of their ability, diligence and dedication.



Mr Sibusiso Ndebele
Ambassador



Dr Zweli Mkhize



Mr Senzo Mchunu



Mr Willies Mchunu



Mr Sihle Zikalala

6. I am privileged and honoured to stand here, indebted to all these selfless patriots who in five foregoing terms, have charted a path for us to follow.

7. Today I stand before this august House to account how we have fared since 1994 and to present a picture of where we are today, and to share a vision of where we need to be in the next 30 years.

8. I stand here a humbled woman on behalf of millions of other women and men of our province, charged with an immense responsibility, marching in the footsteps of great leaders such as Nelson Mandela, oMama Dorothy Nyembe, Ruth First, Ela Gandhi, Sophia Williams-De Bruyn, Fatima Meer, Victoria Mxenge, Florence Mkhize, Winnie Madikizela -Mandela and many others.



DELAYED FREEDOM

9. **Honourable Speaker**, in this era of rampant historical revisionism, it has become fashionable for some amongst us to elect to ignore, or worse to forget the context of where we come from, and ultimately for the truth to become a casualty.

10. With only a few months to our national and provincial elections, we should remember that KwaZulu-Natal was not always a unified province but was almost suffocated at birth by some of the deadliest political intolerance and instability that was unprecedented in our country.

Forging Peace and Stability

11. So deep ran the divisions that the very act of going to the polls in 1994 was itself a miracle. The political violence which consumed this province, resulted in a trail of shattered lives as evidenced by the Steadville, KwaMakhutha, oNgoye, Hammarsdale massacres, the Seven Day War, and many other incidents of political and state sponsored killings.

12. The scars caused by the Trust Feed Massacre ordered by apartheid police captain Brian Mitchell which saw 11 people mowed down at a funeral vigil in the run up to negotiations and our first national elections, are still fresh in our minds.

13. None amongst us can forget the two ANC activists who were killed for mounting ANC posters in Ulundi in April 1994. Nor can we forget the Shobashobane massacre which claimed the lives of 26 people on Christmas Day in 1995.

It is estimated that more than 20 000 people died in KwaZulu-Natal from political violence in the 1980s.

14. As such, the first notable victory of the ANC government was to bring lasting peace in KwaZulu-Natal and the past 20 years have been the most peaceful period in our history, working with the IFP, Faith Based Organisations, Civil Society, Traditional Leaders and many peace loving people of KwaZulu-Natal. Our leaders had to work with single mindedness to deepen the roots of political tolerance and peace.

15. It is a tribute to the people of this province that as we approach the upcoming elections, all political parties will campaign in an environment of political tolerance and stability.

16. As we embraced our freedom in 1994, and to ease into the new environment, for the first decade of our freedom we put in place an arrangement wherein the ANC initially occupied three portfolios in the Provincial Executive Council and later, four portfolios before 2004.

17. Later known as “**Four-by-Four**”, leaders **Ambassador Sibusiso Ndebele, Dr. Zweli Mkhize, Mr. Michael Mabuyakhulu** and the late **Mr. Dumisani Makhaye** displayed the greatest example of dedication, every day gave the people of KwaZulu-Natal a foretaste of service delivery that did not discriminate according to political affiliation, race, gender, or the rural and urban divide.

A Unique Breakthrough



18. While the rest of the country had been basking under the sun of democracy since 1994, it was only 10 years into our freedom that the people of KwaZulu-Natal first tasted the real fruit of liberation in our province. **DARE WE FORGET**

19. It is a matter of historical record that the pace and tempo of delivery of social services quickened after 2004, so much that the phrase “**intuthuko asiyibuzi siyibona ngamehlo**” did not only gain currency, but it became a part of our daily political lexicon. **UNGASIKHOHLWA KANJANI ISIXAXA MBIJI?** So was the creativity and the agility of the ANC Administration.

20. The ushering in of this seminal moment was not without its own challenges as this meant the seat of government had to move from Ulundi to Pietermaritzburg. This affected the entire civil service machinery, from making available office building space to putting new systems in place to ensure we had a government that was functioning effectively. This saved a lot of cost as it consolidated government in one area instead of the driving up and down that was happening and the practicalities of the accessibility of government by the majority of its citizens.

21. But more importantly, we also had the challenging task of creating a new cadre of public servants who are rooted in the Principles of **Batho Pele** - putting people first, **ABANTU KUQALA**.

22. **Honourable Speaker**, we are narrating this history to underscore the point that our province has always had the uncanny ability, even when the odds seem stacked against it to rise above any challenge and to re-imagine every trial as a confluence of limitless possibilities.

23. We tell this history for no other reason than to record our appreciation of the resilience and fortitude of the people of KwaZulu-Natal which over the years and so many times, have lifted us back from the brink and lit clear our way even during the darkest hours.

**LET'S DO MORE
TOGETHER**



24. Honourable Speaker, we deliver our address a few days after the governing party unveiled its Manifesto for the upcoming elections. It is an ambitious, but achievable roadmap not only for the next five years, but the next three decades.

25. We too align with this Manifesto. As the government of the ANC, we too aim to transform our economy by fostering inclusive industries; to address the rising cost of living; to advancing freedom for all; to revitalise our economy and create jobs; to fight crime and corruption; to serve our people better and to contribute towards a better Africa and the world. As the provincial government we also say: “**Let's do more, together**”.

26. We acknowledge the current challenges of constraint energy and water supply in some parts of the province. We are working hard to attend to these issues, and I am convinced that working together we will find lasting solutions.

INSTITUTION OF TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP

27. This government recognition of the existential right of and support of the Traditional Leadership is well documented.

28. **Honourable Speaker**, the government of KwaZulu-Natal accords respect to our Monarch and the Royal Household. As part of this responsibility, over the past years we have fenced all six palaces; bought vehicles for the Queen Mother and the Queens of UMdlokombane; provided financial support for education of Amazinyane and continue to render financial support for all Imikhosi yaseNdlunkulu.

29. We are encouraged at the continuation of the cordial and professional relations that exist between our government and His Majesty, the King. As we did with the late King, we continue to provide administrative and logistical support for the Monarch. In consultation with His Majesty, we are finalizing plans to build a new palace for the King in Nongoma.

**WENA WENDLOVU
BAYEDE!**



Support for Amakhosi

30. The government of KwaZulu-Natal respects and values the institution of traditional leadership.

31. In order to give effect to the proper recognition that ubukhosi deserves, we have transformed the legislative framework, from the old 1990 KwaZulu Amakhosi and Iziphakanyiswa Act of 1990 which was based in the draconian and colonial Bantu Administration Act of 1927 to the passing of the national Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act in 2003 followed by our Provincial Act on Traditional Leadership and Governance of 2005.

32. The aim of the legislative transformation was to rectify a lot of wrongs, including giving the back to royal families the right to choose the heirs and to introduce gender into the composition of traditional councils.

33. Prior to 2004, Amakhosi received a meagre salary of around R5 000 a month and izinduna received no salaries or stipends at all. Government has since increased the salary of amakhosi to R279 000 per annum, representing more than 300% increase over the past twenty years.

34. Ukuze kuvikeleke isithunzi samaKhosi emphakathini, ngo 2005 uhulumeni wesifundazwe wethula uhlelo lokwakhela amakhosi imizi yezizwe ewafanele. Sikhuluma nje ingu 40 Imizi Yezizwe eseyakhiwe.

35. Before 2004, the then administration only built small L-shaped traditional courts for Amakhosi to operate in. Post 2004, government developed a plan to upgrade these courts to respectable offices with halls, boardrooms and offices that can be used by other government departments like Health; SASSA; SAPS, and more.

36. Post 2004, the Government developed a policy that allowed for support to the funerals of each passing Inkosi for up to R50 000 and this is used at the discretion of the family. This amount has since been increased to R80 000 in 2021.

37. From 2004 to date, Amakhosi have benefitted from various training initiatives including the groundbreaking Leadership Development Training that was offered by the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

38. Over 50 Amakhosi enrolled for this programme wholly funded by COGTA on how to try cases as well as to be commissioners of oaths. Furthermore, all 307 Traditional Council Secretaries were also trained in minute taking and report writing, and of late as the Dept provided laptops to them and they have received training in computer usage skills;

39. Ekubhekeleleni iqhaza elibajwe oNdlunkulu uhulumeni uzibophezele ngokubeka eceleni u R10 million ozobhekelela imisebenzi (Projects) eholwa ngoNdlunkulu kulonyakazimali ozayo. Lesisikhwama semisebenzi yoNdlunkulu siyokwethulwa ngokusemthethweni ohlelweni lwe Invest Rural, oluzokuba ngo April 2024, ukuze kuthuthukiswe umnotho, kufukulwe ingqalasizinda, kwenziwe ngcono nempilo yemiphakathi yasezindaweni zasemakhaya.

40. We wish to report that the Government has successfully disbursed payments to an impressive 88% of Izinduna as at the end of October 2023. Following calculations, it transpired that the province had a total of 2,229 current Izinduna, and 775 terminated Izinduna, some that had been replaced and will need to be paid by COGTA resulting in a substantial financial commitment of over R 631 million.

41. **Honourable Speaker**, it pains us deeply to observe incidents of the killing of Amakhosi. Lokhu kuyichilo esasingakaze sicabange ukuthi siyoke silibone ezimpilweni zethu. In 2022, the Provincial Executive Council approved the protection of amaKhosi and currently 9 AmaKhosi are provided with personal protection.

42. The Department of Community Safety and Liaison has been allocated **R11,5 million** to support interventions on the killing of Amakhosi.

43. Since last year, we procured the services of Vodacom to install Broadband and WiFi in the areas of AmaKhosi. We are now installing VSAT internet service, Indoor and outdoor APs, Flood lights, Solar panels (2KVA inverter and battery), 4 cameras plus monitor which is connected in order to secure our communities neZizwe. Anyone who want to go see this state of the artwork by this Government, you can see it under the following AmaKhosi:

- a. Inkosi RS Shinga, Ugu District, uMzumbe
- b. Inkosi PDH Chiliza, Harry Gwala District, Ubuhlebezwe
- c. Inkosi MSI Zulu, Harry Gwala District, Ubuhlebezwe
- d. Inkosi NM Ndzimande, Harry Gwala District, Umzimkhulu
- e. Inkosi NH Zulu, Ilembe District, Maphumulo
- f. Inkosi DZ Gumede, Ilembe District, KwaDukuza
- g. Inkosi NC Maphumulo, eThekwini Metro
- h. Inkosi N Mkhize, UMgungundlovu District, uMngeni
- i. Inkosi P Majazi, UMgungundlovu District, uMsunduzi

These safety measures will be complemented by the safety patrol cars that will be used by the Community Safety Committees and Community Police Forums to complement the work of the Police.

PERFORMANCE OVER THE MTSF (2019-2024)

The Best of Times, The Worst of Times

44. **Honourable Speaker**, allow me to borrow the words of celebrated author Charles Dickens in his seminal work *The Tale of Two Cities* in which he declares:

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair ..., we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way ...”

45. We lift the words of Charles Dickens because they capture the essence of what we went through over the past five years as we experienced dizzying highs and suffered devastating lows.

46. At times, we felt we were on the verge of collapse while at other times we felt we could touch the sky. Hope lived side by side with despair as the paradox that is life played itself out.

47. **Honourable Speaker**, the circumstances around the 6th administration tested our steely resolve and we chose to soldier on.

48. It is a fact that the 6th administration was highly impacted by the triple disasters of the COVID 19 pandemic, the unrest and continuous floods. As a result of COVID 19, the GDP shrank by 7% in 2020 compared with 0,2% growth in 2019.

49. Up to February 2023 we had lost over 16 297 lives to the COVID 19 pandemic and over 102 000 direct jobs were decimated in the Province and the cost of the impact of the pandemic is still unfolding to this day.

50. Following the destructive floods in April 2022, and the July 2021 civil unrest, government implemented a package of recovery programmes. A number of infrastructure was torched or looted eg. Shopping malls, factories to mention but a few.

- a. SASRIA spent over R20 billion rebuilding shopping malls and businesses affected by the social unrest.
- b. More than R2 billion was spent on rebuilding economic infrastructure damaged by the floods, resulting in over 192 000 jobs being saved.
- c. The Department of Trade Industry and Competition (DTIC) relief measures implemented through the National Empowerment Fund (NEF) and the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) Critical Infrastructure Reconstruction Programme, saw a total of 118 applications from affected businesses were approved with a value of R1.9 billion.
- d. The IDC further partnered with the province in allocating R30m support to SMMEs, township and rural businesses affected by the civil unrest. IDC allocated R10m to support the informal businesses that were impacted by the floods of 2022.
- e. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development Tourism and Environmental Affairs allocated R67 million towards flood relief for businesses affected by the floods of 2022 and 2023.

51. Having almost been brought to its knees by the floods, the civil unrest, and global economic challenges, today our economy is back on its feet, gradually addressing the damage which is estimated to be in the region of R33 billion.

52. **Honourable Speaker**, as a coastal province we have a ports system that is vital to the economic growth of the rest of the country and we welcome the leadership of His Excellency the President who took initiative of coming to Richards Bay in KwaZulu-Natal to see first hand and provide leadership on the matters of the Ports.

53. Following His oversight visit to the Port of Richards Bay recently, we have witnessed a significant decrease in the road truck traffic leading to the Port of Richards Bay as congestion decreased.

54. This has been a collective achievement through the introduction of the Truck Management Strategy championed by the Ports Authority.



55. At the Port of Durban, after having received word on the introduction of the Container Surcharge by Shipping Lines because of the container backlog in our Ports, we are delighted to report that the number of vessels at anchorage has **reduced from more than 60 ships in mid-November, to just 12 ships at the end of January 2024**. We recognize, with appreciation the role played by the industry as well as local businesses in ensuring our ports are held accountable and deliver on their intended mandate of facilitating international trade.

56. **Honourable Speaker**, when His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa delivered the Manifesto of the governing ANC on Saturday 24 February 2024 at a packed Moses Mabhida Stadium, he highlighted 6 key priority areas that the government will be focusing on in accelerating service delivery. I am pleased to report to this house that these priorities align very well with ours in the Province.

PRIORITY 1: A CAPABLE, ETHICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL STATE

57. Honourable Speaker, since 1994, one of the priorities of our democratic state has been to build a public sector that is increasingly a more effective machinery for development, building its critical human and technical resources while leaving no one behind.

58. As such, I am pleased to announce that the Executive Council approved the appointment of 4 Heads of Department during this financial year, namely Agriculture and Rural Development, Public Works, Community Safety and Liaison and Sport, Arts and Culture.

59. Our government has been uncompromising in our dedication to clean government focusing on fighting fraud and corruption, ending wasteful and irregular expenditure, and increasing the number of departments that obtain clean audits from the Auditor General.

60. Similarly, we are yearning for ethical leaders in the private sector who will not seek to bribe or corrupt public servants and who will not collude to fix prices and hamper competition. Working together, we must punish lawlessness mercilessly wherever it raises its ugly head.

61. As a result of this concerted effort in the 2022/23 financial year, a total of **6 Departments and the Provincial Legislature received clean audits from the Auditor General**. This is a major improvement when compared to only two (2) in 2018/19. Qualified Audits decreased from 6 in 2018/19 to only one (1) in 2022/23. 12 Provincial Public entities, 10 of which are under the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, 1 in Human Settlements and 1 in Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs also received clean audits.

62. We are strengthening our support for businesses by ensuring that enterprises that do business with government are paid on time. We have launched Operation Pay on Time, a province-wide programme that assists with resolving payment queries from suppliers that do business with government. From April 2023 alone, the total number of cases and queries received is 288, of this number, 216 were resolved with a value of R281m paid to suppliers.





Consequence Management on Fraud and Corruption

63. In implementing consequence management:

- a. From 2019, 508 investigations were instituted of which 482 have been concluded.
- b. Over 113 officials were placed on precautionary suspension.
- c. 1492 disciplinary enquiries have since been finalised with 78 disciplinary cases currently pending across the province.

64. In 2023 the Consequence Management Officer (CMO) was appointed as per the requirements of the Framework, and the Consequence Management Committee is up and running.

65. The 16 804 cases out of 17 893, which is 94% received from the Presidential Hotline have been resolved since inception. Out of the 888 cases received provincially since 2009, 879 have been resolved, which is 98% through the National Anti-Corruption Hotline.

66. As undertaken during the SOPA last year, SMS members from all our 13 provincial departments had submitted their disclosure of financial interests by 30 April 2023.

67. In 2022 the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs embarked on a province-wide assessment of our 54 municipalities looking at political Stability, Good Governance, Administration, Financial Viability and Basic Service Delivery.

68. A key finding is that the number of municipalities being categorized as dysfunctional decreased from 11 to 7. The number of municipalities categorized as being at risk went down from 31 to 14, posting an improvement of 32%.

Digital Transformation and ICT

69. **Honourable Speaker**, we are moving the province towards full digitization, harnessing opportunities that come with enhanced efficiency and effectiveness in government whilst bringing opportunity for economic growth and jobs for citizens.

70. Among these milestones, we are implementing the Provincial Digital Transformation Strategy. The Provincial Digital Information and Innovation Hub has been set up to serve as the province wide data repository and analytics centre. This hub will assist in the monitoring and evaluation of government implementation of its policies and programmes to be used as a platform to engage citizens.

a. We are increasingly adopting a paperless government with services set to use less physical documentation to a total elimination altogether.

b. In 2022 at least 85% of KwaZulu-Natal residents had access to the internet. This is a significant improvement since 2011 where 66% of households had no access via cell phone or other means.

c. Schools are being converted into skills development centres by setting up digital skills labs in each district.

d. As part of this programme, the province has trained 3 875 youth in 4 district activations covering 16 areas. Subsequent to these activations, there are -18 young people who opened their ICT businesses. Some of them have been contracted with Broadband Infraco (BBI) for SA Connect KZN. They will each employ 25 people through this contract.

e. In addition, 16 of 76 Special Schools were provided with Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) equipment to promote e-learning.

f. The following schools were supported with the provision of tablets as sponsored by Stats SA in the following Districts:

Amajuba:	139
Harry Gwala:	462
Ilembe:	625
King Cetshwayo:	1182
eThekweni:	228
Ugu:	376
uMgungundlovu:	623
uMzinyathi:	1560
Zululand:	1029
TOTAL:	6224



71. Following the successful amendment of the curriculum and to prepare learners for the 4th Industrial Revolution, 233 schools are implementing the robotics and coding curriculum at intermediate phase (Grade 7).

72. **Honourable Speaker**, all 164 provincial libraries now have Wi-Fi connectivity and all Hospitals and Clinics are connected. All our Provincial departments are connected and in addition, by October 2030, all will have public facing Wi-Fi connectivity.

PRIORITY 2: ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AND JOB CREATION

73. **Honourable Speaker**, during the period of the lockdown, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, our government worked very closely with companies, led by the KwaZulu-Natal Economic Council and KZN Growth Coalition, to develop an Economic Transformation and Recovery Plan for the province.

74. The reason for the involvement of the private sector was to ensure that the plan does not only talk to government, but also to the private sector.

75. Together we drove the process of “business retention and aftercare”. We focused on resuscitating companies through critical interventions such as import replacement and localization where we encouraged companies to buy local. We further assisted companies to tap into government relief measures, most of which were grant funding. Government also supported initiatives in reskilling staff during that period.

76. We rebranded and aggressively marketed KwaZulu-Natal not only as an investment destination, but as South Africa's premium tourist hotspot. KwaZulu-Natal partnered with companies to safeguard employment within our existing base, while also seeking to identify and recruit new investors.

77. Remarkably we saw investment and commitment to job creation amongst KZN companies, grow despite the steepest global downturn in a generation.

78. We accelerated business permits and license approvals for priority catalytic projects in order to stimulate growth and development of the province and the commitment by government to the rapid provision of bulk services including planning approvals.

79. To deal with challenges of red tape and inefficiencies we have established the One Stop Shop, at Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal. It provides investors with a single window to process applications for licenses, permits and visas, and facilitates the requisite approvals that are needed to set up an investment project in KwaZulu-Natal. Satellite offices of the One Stop Shop have been established in uMgungundlovu, Harry Gwala, Ilembe, and Ugu.

80. As KwaZulu-Natal, we faced an uphill battle in ensuring that investor confidence is unwavering despite challenges with load-shedding, the civil unrest, ageing utilities' infrastructure, some of which could not withstand the recent floods. Yet we remain determined to continue in our quest to ensure that investors know that KwaZulu-Natal is and remains the most favoured investment destination in Southern Africa.

81. The Washington Times in its feature on South Africa in July 2023 wrote; “South Africa, a country of immense potential and opportunity, has emerged as a leading investment destination for international businesses.

82. With its diverse and vibrant economy, strategic location, robust infrastructure, and supportive business environment, South Africa offers a wealth of prospects for investors seeking growth and expansion.”

83. This supports the cause by President Ramaphosa to increase foreign direct investments into South Africa through Presidential Investment Conference and other multilateral institutions including BRICS. Prior to the President committing government to raise R1.2 trillion worth of investments into the economy over a five-year period, companies had a wait and see approach to doing business in our country. We witnessed in last year's South African Investment Conference that the President's target was exceeded by some R306 billion.

84. KZN's share included 55 KZN companies such as Vodacom Group Ltd, MSC Nelson Mandela Cruise Terminal, Oceans Development including the Radisson Blu Hotel, Sappi, Nyanza Light Metals, Wilmar, Defy, Hesto Harnesses, Heineken SA, South African Breweries, CHEM Energy, Art Solar, uMhlanga Arc, etc. investing to the value of more than R300 billion. Some of these investments have located themselves at the provinces Special Economic Zones; Richards Bay and Dube TradePort and around the Province. This would not have happened of there was no credible leadership that supported the growth of the KZN Economy.

85. Targeted business expansion and retention support activities amounted to over R23 billion resulting in 37 201 jobs being created. Added to this, are investments attracted by Trade and Investment KwaZulu-Natal over the last two decades amounting to over R60 billion and creating over 95_000 jobs.

86. Newcastle and Ladysmith corridor: KwaZulu-Natal is committed to the establishment of new leather and textile Special Economic Zones in the Newcastle and Ladysmith corridor. These are estimated at R 600 million. The two new SEZs will add to the two provincial Special Economic Zones (SEZ) of Dube Trade Port and Richards Bay IDZ and will create 4500 employment opportunities.



87. Black Industrialists: The purpose of Black Industrialists (BI) policy is to support black owned manufacturers through State resources to develop and grow the manufacturing base. In KwaZulu-Natal, 35 Black Industrialists have been supported by the DTIC for grant funding and they will create approximately 4 000 jobs. The target is to support 10 new Black Industrialists in the coming financial year.

88. KwaZulu-Natal has 35 small scale fisheries cooperatives comprising of 1000 small scale fishers registered by Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment. They are located along the coastline at Ugu, EThekweni, King Cetshwayo, Ilembe and Umkhanyakude Districts. Government has rolled out training to capacitate these fishers in the variety of Ocean Economy and Maritime technical skills.

89. **Honourable Speaker**, the story of economic growth and unemployment present practically the paradox that is our reality. While the unemployment figures may cause us to despair, the rate of investment into the province gives us courage that certainly tomorrow will be better than today.

90. While we are encouraged by the fact that employment has increased in the last two quarters, we however remain concerned that unemployment in our province at 33% remains high, even though it remains below the national unemployment rate.

91. Some government led projects to create jobs include, the Port of Durban's R1,34 billion investment programme which was aimed at upgrading port facilities to mainly increase port capacity, creating 1 328 jobs.

92. The Passenger Rail Agency South Africa (PRASA) spent over R 900 million in KwaZulu-Natal through its capital programme on investment and infrastructure works. This includes projects on rolling stock upgrades, Bridge City Development with new rail network, new access gates and CCTV Cameras and stations, Dalbridge turnaround facility and general infrastructure station improvement. These were never there prior to this ANC Government.

93. In 2023, the R2 billion Dr Pixley ka Isaka Seme Regional Hospital was officially opened with 500 beds and a full package of regional services provided. This hospital has changed lives especially in the Phoenix, Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMashu (PINK) area and created 5 312 jobs during construction.

94. We have long acknowledged that government alone cannot address the enormous developmental challenges that we face. In order to accelerate development, we have partnered with the private sector to stimulate our economy. The following are Public and Private projects worth over R129 billion that have created over 339_000 jobs:

- a. Arcelor Mittal Blast Furnace R500m project has created 1 328 jobs.
- b. The Greater Dukuduku Project, worth R37.6 billion, has created 99 947 jobs.
- c. Hillside Aluminium, worth R1.2 billion, has resulted in the creation of 3 187 jobs.
- d. Isimangaliso Wetland, which is worth R250 million has created 2 187 Jobs.
- e. Lower Tugela Bulk Water Supply Scheme - Phase 1, which is worth R1, 5 billion has created 20 000 jobs.
- f. Makhathini Integrated Development Project, R270 million, has resulted in the creation of 1 711 Jobs.

- g. Mr Price Distribution Centre - Keystone Park, which is worth R1, 1 billion has put food on the table for 3 100 people if one considers the entire value-chain.
- h. The Development of Regional Airports such as the Pietermaritzburg Airport Upgrade at R40 million has created 1 328 Jobs, while the Mkhuze Airport's R72 million upgrade has seen 1500 jobs created.
- i. The R 1 billion Techno Hub in Richards Bay has created 3 000 jobs.
- j. Samsung Electronics, R260 million project has led to the creation of 691 jobs.
- k. Toyota Auto Body (TAB) with the value of R6.1 billion has preserved 16 202 jobs.
- l. The SAB Expansion multi million rand investment, Prospecton plant in Isiphingo which will create 25 000 jobs for the entire value chain.
- m. The Takealot Distribution centre in Riverhorse Valley, Durban with the value of 6 billion which be over 3 phases with estimated 20 000 jobs to be created.

Comprehensive Producer Support and Inclusive Township and Rural Economy Revitalization

95. Spatial inequality in levels of economic development across the province continues to be a policy challenge faced by government. Whilst there is high concentration of economic activity in the metropolitan and urban areas,

96. Underdevelopment in townships and rural areas remains an enormous challenge. Noting this challenge, over the years government has prioritised programmes such as broad band, shared production infrastructure, spaza shops, informal trading infrastructure, promoting investment in retail malls and industries as a way to revive and stimulate townships and rural areas.

97. It is against this backdrop that a week ago, Government launched R22 million Zimele traders' fund. This programme is designed to uplift community and spaza shops by offering working capital loan funding, infrastructure grants for shop refurbishment, and payment automation facilities. Its goal is to help these businesses evolve into viable shopping outlets, providing a comprehensive one-stop shopping experience. Its goal is to help these businesses evolve into viable shopping outlets, providing a comprehensive one-stop shopping experience.

98. Honourable Speaker when the ANC took over in 2004, a total of 50% of the province's households were vulnerable to hunger. This figure dropped to 12% in 2022.

99. Since 2019 the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) supported 17 266 smallholder producers and through the Multi-Planting Season programme, 150 000 hectares were planted for food production across the province to support food production.

100. Through One Home One Garden, Seed and Seedlings Multiplication Programme and other food security interventions DARD supported 128 205 food insecure households from 2019 to date and supported a total of 79 142 subsistence producers.

101. **Honourable Speaker**, provincial budget cuts undertaken across government departments, along with dramatic increases in food prices, have a negative impact on access to food.

102. I have therefore tasked the MEC for DARD to set up a special purpose vehicle and transfer the Agri-Hubs and the Commercial Mechanisation programme to speed up implementation. This Special Purpose Vehicle will attract investment, increase production, and create domestic and export markets for our farmers and be self-funding.



ROUTE DEVELOPMENT

103. According to a study by Forbes (2020), at the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic, the global aviation sector became one of the hardest hit industries due to the ongoing travel and movement restrictions in place, to control the spread of Covid -19.

104. Over 40 airlines grounded their fleet and major carriers including British Airways and Cathay Pacific grounded 96% of their fleet. Airlines across the world relied on government support ranging from bailout to full tax-payer ownership.

105. Aviation is at the heart of global economic development and is widely recognised as a key contributor to economic and social development; and a catalyst to the growth of the trade and tourism sector.

106. Over time, Governments across the world have come to understand the importance of air connectivity built on global standards and to include it as a priority in their economic strategies.

107. The attraction of more direct international flights to King Shaka Airport is therefore key to grow our economy, regional trade and tourism in particular. We were impacted negatively by Covid 19 and lost a number of direct flights from international markets into King Shaka International.

108. We have brought our initiatives back on track to attract more airlines to fly into King Shaka. We are grateful to Emirates Airlines, Qatar Airway, Turkish Airlines, Airlink, eSwatini Air and others for reinvesting in this route to create easier access to not only the neighbouring countries but globally as well.

109. We urge the business sector in particular to support these initiatives by utilising these services as they are geared to support them and their enterprises.

PRIORITY 3: EDUCATION, SKILLS, AND HEALTH

110. **Honourable Speaker**, in 2001 KwaZulu-Natal had the highest HIV prevalence rate at 33,5% among women attending antenatal clinics in the public sector. In 2002 we rolled out the prevention of mother to child transmission to pregnant women, but it was in 2004 that the full roll out was implemented.

111. I must mention that HIV/AIDS is not the only major health threat that KwaZulu-Natal has managed effectively, saving thousands of lives.

112. The province has stabilized HIV and AIDS rates with the successful roll-out of ARVs which placed 95% or 1.65 million HIV positive people on treatment.

113. KwaZulu-Natal has the most extensive Anti-Retroviral Therapy Programme in the country, and this has cut maternal mortality in facility from a high of 198 per 100 000 in 2012, to 85 per 100 000 live births in 2022.

114. We are proud to mention that KwaZulu-Natal has not only achieved the United Nation's 90-90-90 HIV/Aids strategy targets, but we surpassed it and achieved the latest, which is 95-95-95.

115. The total sum is that the efforts of government and partners, including endorsements by former African Presidents, have resulted in a drastic reduction in deaths and a corresponding increase in life expectancy. HIV/AIDS has been reduced to a manageable chronic disease.

116. This remarkable achievement has saved the lives of mothers, but also of the babies. Prevalence among the youth aged 15-24 has also been stabilized. Non-communicable diseases like diabetes, hypertension and heart disease are a growing concern due to lifestyle factors such as unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, smoking, and alcohol consumption.



117. On average the residents of KwaZulu-Natal are today dying from non-communicable diseases which is an increase of almost 60% over 20 years. As we tried to resolve one issue, another has emerged as KwaZulu-Natal now has the highest proportion of non-natural deaths in the country at 86%.

118. The hugely successful medical male circumcision drive, which was spearheaded by ISILO esesiyinyandezulu, uMdlokombane, contributed greatly to the reduction of transmission without any mortality. Indeed, we owe a great debt to honour the legacy of a great king that God borrowed us for 50 years.

119. This unique achievement was a collaboration between health workers, traditional leaders and civil society. It was further endorsed by a group of eminent leaders and former Presidents from the African continent.

120. KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, working with Medical Research Council interventions resulted in unprecedented 95% reduction in malaria cases and mortality, winning South Africa an award from the World Health Organisation.

121. The cholera epidemic that affected 300 000 people was not only defeated but also, the mortality rate was kept below 1%. That was a result of unprecedented collaboration between government health workers, civil society, artists, traditional and religious leadership in mobilising communities to defeat the epidemic.

122. We must appreciate the work of Khabazela and his team for really dedicating resources and focused on developing an equitable health system in the Province.

123. On education Honourable Speaker, we are proud of the high literacy rate which has been achieved by our Province. The Masifundisane Campaign, which was launched by our erstwhile Premier, Ambassador Sibusiso Ndebele had a lot to do with this success.

124. While in 1996 a modest 52% children accessed Grade R, today we have 95% of children accessing Grade R.

125. No-fee schools were virtually not existent in our province in 2004. Today we have seen over 2.1 million learners benefiting from no fee schools.

126. In 1997, the matric pass rate was at a low 47%. While the matric results of the 2004 academic year showed a 71% pass rate, it is encouraging and fulfilling that the 2023 National Senior Certificate academic year results recorded an 86% pass rate, in an environment with greater education access than in the baseline year.

127. The province of KwaZulu-Natal produced the highest number of distinctions in the country and placed overall second, with all 12 KZN districts having achieved an 80% average pass rate. We are aiming for first place and are determined to get there.

128. It is worth pointing out that female learners outperformed males in matric pass and bachelors pass rates. While males achieved a 44% bachelor pass rate, females came in at 47%.

129. In fact, 180 000 female learners sat for their exams, against 136 000 males which explains the worrying fact that too many of our boys, for a variety of reasons do not complete matric.

130. Access to higher education and training has been expanded and the percentage of persons aged 20 years and older with no schooling has declined drastically from 22,5% in 1996 to 8,3% in 2022.

131. In 2002, there were 28 Training Colleges or Teacher Training Colleges that were merged in 2002/2003 to establish the FET Colleges now called TVET Colleges in various districts in KwaZulu-Natal. Today we have 9 TVET Colleges with 86 campuses some with the skills development centres included.

KZN Maritime University

132. KwaZulu-Natal is home to premier ports in South Africa, namely the Port of Durban and Port of Richards Bay. In order to harness both the competitive and comparative advantages stemming from the maritime economy, we are accelerating efforts to build a maritime university in Ugu District Municipality. A feasibility indicates that at least R5.9 billion is required for the establishment and operationalization of the Maritime University.

133. Further, at least 12 new specialist schools focusing on maritime and ICT will be built this year. This which includes a Maritime School of Excellence and an ICT focus School in Amajuba District. It also includes the Maritime School of Excellence in Umlazi is currently under construction and has recorded 34 %progress to date.

134. Training of 15 Maritime Graduates in Marine Engineering, Computer Science, Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering to be qualified and registered Engineers

PRIORITY 4: CONSOLIDATING THE SOCIAL WAGE THROUGH BASIC SERVICES

135. Honourable Speaker, we are also number one when it comes to Child Grants as there are just under 3 million beneficiaries of the programme here in KwaZulu-Natal giving us the highest number in South Africa.

136. What this means is that despite all the challenges in our economy, the democratic government has provided a safety net for the poor and vulnerable individuals and households. Put another way, were it not for grants, over 4 million people in KwaZulu-Natal would be going to bed hungry as one grant tends to serve more than one person.

137. I do want to state however our view that is in increasing access to employment and skills training opportunities that we will finally defeat poverty and unemployment.



PRIORITY 5: SPATIAL INTEGRATION, HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

138. **Honourable Speaker**, a direct link remains between our inherited spatial patterns and the stubborn persistence of poverty, inequality, and economic inefficiency.

139. Madam Speaker we made a commitment to the people of KwaZulu-Natal that we will do everything in our power to ensure the provision of decent housing and housing opportunities. We achieved these by using instruments such as:

- a. Delivery of Serviced Sites
- b. Building Fully Subsidised Housing Units
- c. Affordable Rental
- d. Financed Linked Individual Subsidy Programme /First Home Finance
- e. Informal Settlements Upgrading

140. Honourable Speaker and members will note that since the dawn of democracy in 1994 we have built **690 000 housing units** in KwaZulu-Natal which means more than 2,8 million KZN citizens live in houses built by this democratic government. This excludes the 130 000 sites that have been made available over the same 30-year period.

141. A total of **52 974 fully subsidised houses** were built for the qualifying destitute families in various parts of the Province and **36 400 of these housing units** were replacing mud houses. “**Siyaziqeda Izindlu Zodaka**”. We have also noted the breakthroughs made in the delivery of houses for Military Veterans.

142. A total of **16 973 serviced sites** were made available to people who could afford to build their own top structures.

143. The 19 Social Housing projects have delivered 2532 rented Units targeting people that can afford to pay rent in the social housing schemes. This is addition to the 1 116 rental Units that were delivered in Community Residential Units, an example of these units is not far from here as 404 units are now occupied at Jika Joe just here in the City of uMsunduzi next to the N3. Other active similar projects under construction located in uMvoti, Newcastle, Kokstad and uBuhlebezwe Local Municipalities.

The breakdown of the 1116 is as follows: Jika Joe - 404 units, Kokstad CRU - 228 units, Ubhlebethu CRU - 102 units, N11 Cru - 190 units and Nhlalakahle CRU - 192 units

144. The 22 Priority Development Areas were declared to support DDM in areas such as KwaDukuza Town/Hyde Park-Nonoti Area, Empangeni, Richards Bay, eSikhaleni Vulindlela Corridor, Msunduzi North and East Development Areas, uMlazi/Austerville, Ladysmith Development Area, Newcastle.

145. Informal settlements and Farm Workers: We noted the closure of Isiphingo Transit Camp as families were taking occupation of the new housing units in Kanku Road. In order to address the Upgrading of Informal Settlements and Farm Workers challenges vast land parcels have been acquired and in areas such as:

- a. 51,6817 hectares in Emadlangeni
- b. 132.6170 hectares in Newcastle (Farm Boschhoek)
- c. 57,2682 hectares in Abaqulusi
- d. 86,5623 hectares in Inkosi Langalibalele, just to name a few

146. At the 2023 SOPA I reported that all 135 Halls (Mass Care Centres) were closed prior to the deadline of Christmas eve of 2022. Today I announce that the rented buildings known as Transitional Emergency Accommodations (TEAs) have been closed in all other municipalities except eThekweni Metro. For example, the so called "Truro Hall Northdale Flood Victims" are now happily integrating with the community of Copesville where their permanent homes are being provided.

147. Through subsidized housing our cities are slowly being transformed while we are addressing the formation of informal settlements and providing housing for our military veterans.

148. One of these projects is the Vulindlela Rural Housing Project at R2,4 billion which has created over 1 832 jobs.

PRIORITY 6: SOCIAL COHESION AND SAFE COMMUNITIES

149. **Honourable Speaker**, crime cuts through all facets of life and has the potential to damage the prospects of investment and economic growth. Levels of violent crime remain high, with politically motivated killings on the rise and Gender-Based Violence and Femicide remaining an ongoing challenge.

150. According to the latest SAPS statistics, great improvement has been recorded for crimes which are dependent on police action for detection with an increase of 9,6% or 2419 cases.

151. This is a ray of hope as our province has stabilized violence in areas such as Umsinga, eThekweni Hostels of “KwaMashu Hostel and Glebelands Hostel”. Add to this, taxi related violence in Folweni, Chesterville, Pinetown, Mpumalanga and KwaDabeka have been stabilized.

152. To sustain stability the Department of Community Safety and Liaison embarked on community training programmes dealing with safety and in partnership with Higher Education and Training we are implementing a programme named “Thathulwazi, Lwisana Nobugebengu”. This program seeks to engender a culture of fighting crime among young people who can become exemplary citizens of the future.



Cross Border Crimes

153. **Honourable Speaker**, as a nation of laws we stand against any form of crime and admittedly our concern rises even higher with so-called cross border crimes. Our concern has little to do with the nationality of the alleged perpetrators of crime, but more with the possible ramifications stemming from such acts of crime, given our past.

154. The highly publicized and violent murder of anti-crime activists in Umhlabuyalingana, Mr Judah Mthethwa and Sandile Tembe, shook all of us.

155. We commend the police for making a swift breakthrough in the pursuit of the suspected perpetrators of this heinous act. However, there is no escaping the fact that families have lost fathers and brothers while the community has lost leaders.

156. We are pursuing diplomatic channels to ensure that properties of South Africans stuck in sister countries illegally are returned to their rightful owners. In this regard, we met with the Mozambican High Commissioner to South Africa last year to discuss this matter.

157. We have installed jersey barriers at exit points to make it difficult for stolen vehicles to cross into Mozambique.

158. We are working closely with the SAPS Specialised KZN Stabilising Team to address issues of criminality in and around the Manguzi area. As a result of these interventions, several highly sought criminals have been arrested and are now facing justice.

159. This special team, when we visited there, late last year with Police Minister Bheki Cele, it had arrested 103 suspects, 4 had been convicted, 56 dockets were in court, 193 motor vehicles had been identified or which 63 had been handed back to the owners. A further 42 cases were under investigation.

Resourcing the Police

160. Over the past four years, KZN's police capacity has been augmented by new members and in the past two years we received a total of over 4 000 new police officers.

161. In the 2024/25 financial year, the Department of Community Safety and Liaison will establish Community Safety Intervention Unit (CSIU) which will work together with other law-enforcement agencies as a force multiplier proactively and reactively fighting crime in our communities.



162. Crime fighting will be further strengthened through the recruitment of one thousand (1000) social crime prevention volunteers covering the entire province. The SAPS has also announced significant improvements in the allocation of resources with more vehicles and trainee constables being made available in KwaZulu-Natal.

163. The Department of Community Safety and Liaison has bought 60 safety patrol cars that will be used by the Community Safety Committees and Community Police Forums to complement the work of the Police. The cars are on display outside for all of us to see.



Gender Based Violence and Femicide

164. In 2022 the Provincial Executive Council approved the Provincial Gender Based Violence and Femicide Strategic Implementation Plan. The Office of the Premier as the coordinating office is leading the implementation of this strategy and has forged strategic partnerships for the GBVF Response Programmes.

165. These partners include the KZN Gaming Board, Isibaya Casino, United Nations Population Fund, AIDS Foundation of South Africa, TBHIV Care, Cloud Therapist, Vodacom, Imbumba Foundation, SAB, and Spar Group. This structure is responsible for addressing high profile cases and supporting District Rapid Response Teams.

- a. On the Justice, Safety and Protection pillar we applaud the installation of Victim-Friendly Rooms in 28 Police Stations by Isibaya Casino. Vodacom has installed a borehole and streetlights in GBVF hotspots in Nongoma.
- b. At least 755 survivors of GBVF accessed services in government supported GBVF Shelters and 112 964 survivors received psychosocial support services from the Department of Social Development and their partners.
- c. A total of 3 540 victims of Gender Based Violence and Femicide and crime accessed Khuseleka/ White Door houses and shelters
- d. District Focal Points and stakeholders from 11 districts were trained as Master Trainers.
- e. Currently, there are 74 functional Ward-Based Rapid Response Teams integrated to War Rooms.
- f. One of the best ways is to assist GBVF survivors through economic empowerment and this year 26 401 women were reached with economic Empowerment programmes.
- g. 300 women in business have been supported with card machines by the Office of the Premier. A GBVF App with a panic button is being developed by Moses Kotane Institute with funds from Isibaya Casino.

166. We are determined to ensure that women are continuously empowered. In this regard through the Department of Social Development, Seda and EDTEA, we have trained over 500 women in business skills.

Most of these women were victims of GBVF. To this end they have received start up packs to set up and run their own businesses.

PRIORITY 7: A BETTER AFRICA AND A BETTER WORLD

167. **Honourable Speaker**, South Africa is not an island and depends on fraternal relations with sister countries to pursue its objectives and to contribute to the creation of a just peaceful and prosperous world order.

168. We are positioning KwaZulu-Natal at the epicentre of Africa's Sustainable Economic Growth and Development. Africa is not only the next frontier of growth but is destined to be the biggest economic story of our times.

169. The province borders three countries; Lesotho, eSwatini and Mozambique and we continue to develop closer relations with our neighbours. KwaZulu-Natal has an excellent value proposition with a world class freight and logistics sector.

170. Critically, in a world where city regions and nation states are staking their claim for the slice of the global economy, our province cannot afford to get left behind.

171. We are members of a Multipolar world in which our country works with all the powerful Nations of the world such as the USA, UK, China, India, Brazil, and Russia with equal zeal.

172. From a business point of view our province has hosted the BRICS Business Forum and we work closely with Afreximbank and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

AfCFTA is led by one of South Africa's own as Secretary General His Excellency Mr Wamkele Mene, whom we congratulate for being re-elected for another term of four years. We are committed to the African Agenda and the development of linkages within the African Continent.

173. **Madam Speaker**, we witnessed trade under the new preferences set out in the AfCFTA which was launched by President Cyril Ramaphosa on the 31st of January 2024, in Durban. This was a historic moment for South Africa, and for KwaZulu-Natal in particular, in that, one of our own companies Defy was part of the first shipments of products to Kenya. We congratulate Defy and wish to encourage all other companies to take advantage of the AfCFTA.

174. Our country remains a beacon of a peaceful democratic transition and continues to support liberation struggles globally thus entrenching a culture of human rights and equality internationally.

175. One of these interventions was when our government in December 2023 in support of the people of Palestine successfully appealed for a ceasefire at the International Court of Justice at the Hague. Our support continues for all downtrodden people of the world including those in Western Sahara.

DEALING WITH THE THREAT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

176. **Honourable Chairperson**, no province in South Africa has faced the impact of climate change like KwaZulu-Natal which during successive floods has been buffeted by the worst natural disaster in recent history.

177. Our response has been determined, sustained and clinical, and the Departments of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs and res have established a resilient settlements programme responding directly to the recent experience of KwaZulu-Natal.

178. In October 2023 the Provincial Executive Council adopted the Climate Change Strategy and as part of Disaster Management, 1000 smoke alarms were installed in the province benefiting 3219 community members.

179. For the 2023/24 financial year the Provincial Disaster Management Centre (PDMC) budgeted R52 million for the installation of lightning conductors.

180. The province will also implement the Provincial Plan of Action on building resilient settlements and develop the flood plan for Province with guidelines identifying and managing high risk areas.

MASS EMPLOYMENT CREATION

181. **Madam Speaker**, during the State of the Province Address last year, I announced that government will be implementing Mass Job Creation Programme to assist our people, especially youth, to get out of the cycle of poverty and be self-sustainable.

182. Today I am pleased to account with buoyance at the fact that we have created over 655 547 jobs and job opportunities across the provincial departments and districts, since I made that announcement.

183. These opportunities are in learnerships and internships, Community Works Programme (CWP), Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), permanent jobs in government under S'thesha Waya Waya and centralized government e-Recruitment Programme.

184. To demonstrate our commitment to creating meaningful and sustainable jobs let me further state that since December 2023, I have approved the following posts:

- a. At COGTA, I approved 6 senior and middle management posts
- b. At Community Safety and Liaison: 14 posts have been approved
- c. While at Economic Development Tourisms and Environmental Affairs I have approved the appointment of two (2) Deputy Directors-General
- d. At Provincial Treasury I approved 88 posts, and these will contribute immensely towards our resolve to strengthen fiscal management.
- e. At Sport, Arts & Culture 50 posts have been approved
- f. At Social Development 1 Director post was approved

185. We have also approved contract positions and internships to create more job opportunities,
- a. COGTA: 100 Interns and 16 Work Integrated Learners
 - b. At the Department of Transport, I have approved 6 Contract positions for senior and middle management
 - c. At Social Development 68 Interns
 - d. KZN Sharks Board: 12 Contract positions and 23 Unemployed Graduates
 - e. In the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development: Extension of 67 contract positions of Agricultural Advisors and appointment of 4 new Agricultural Advisors and 3 Candidate Engineers all for a period of 3 years.
 - f. Human Settlements: 12 Work Integrated Learners

186. Through the EPWP we have employed 48 000 men and women through the Community Work Programme across the Province. We surpassed the 45 000-national threshold. Over 11 047 youth and 685 are people with disability benefits from the programme. We unveiled over 17 000 at the Harry Gwala Stadium in August last year and we issue them with new contracts.

187. The Invasive Alien Species Programme has led to the creation of 37 500 work opportunities through the cleaning of invasive plants on environmentally sensitive areas, water catchments, productive agricultural and degraded lands. A further 40 892 work opportunities were created through the clearing of invasive alien plants.

188. The jobs that we have created were as a result of outbound funding of businesses under the Youth Programme. The first rollout of the KwaZulu-Natal Youth Empowerment Fund was in 2019/2020 and total of R50 million was disbursed to youth-owned businesses.

189. In the second rollout of the Fund, in 2023, we disbursed R 90 million to 60 business enterprises owned by young people.

190. We are currently disbursing R100 million for the third rollout for government-initiated projects.

191. As part of this rollout we have partnered with Dunlop Tyres to implement the innovative Business in a Box programme. This programme is designed for young people aged between 18-35 years, who are interested in the provision of tyre services (wheel balancing, alignment, tyre change and other associated tasks) We have already invested in 22 young people, some of whom have started. I have already visited one in KwaMakhutha, one in eFolweni and one in Ladysmith. This project will be implemented in all 10 districts and the Metro.

192. I am pleased to announce that we will be opening another window of the Youth Empowerment Fund for R100 million in the 2024/2025 as the fourth rollout.

193. Government has disbursed over R 300 million to over 1 000 businesses, for the first phase of Operation Vula Fund during the 2021/2022 period. The second phase of Operation Vula is underway and we are currently processing Tier 1 with over R192 million set aside for this Tier alone.

LEVERAGING EVENTS AND SPORTS FOR ACCELERATED GROWTH

194. The Meeting Incentives Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) sector continues to be a key pillar for economic growth in our province and in 2022/23 the MICE sector contributed immensely into the province's economy.

195. Through the KwaZulu-Natal Convention Bureau, it is estimated that the MICE sector generated over R 2, 2 billion for the province. By the end of the second quarter of this year the Convention Bureau estimates that, through global events, the province anticipated to have welcome over 30 000 local and international delegates, which will pump over R390 million rand into the local economy.

Support for Artists

196. **Honourable Speaker**, we value our artists and have always supported them. This year, we issued an advert for artists from KwaZulu-Natal to apply for funding support for their events. Hundreds of artists applied, and we funded more than 300 artists who met the criteria.

197. In preparation for this year's window of applications, we have requested Treasury to determine departmental contributions that will be ring-fenced for this programme.

198. We have directed the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture to strengthen the relationship with the KZN Cultural and Creative Industry. To this end the Provincial government will host a KZN Cultural and Creative Industry Summit before end of June 2024. This Summit, among others, will discuss the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders and the challenges faced by the industry with the aim of coming up with effective resolutions.



Africa's Biggest Trade Show

199. We are pleased that 2024/25 will see the province again hosting Africa's Travel Indaba, which is one of the biggest travel gatherings in the world and we estimate that international and business events will result in direct expenditure in KZN of R20 billion from the tourists leading to 138 000 job opportunities in our tourism sector.

200. The World Football Summit (WFS) that was hosted in 2022, which was the first-ever on the African continent generated business opportunities and an estimated economic impact of about R250 million.

201. The Dundee July, a Rural Horse-Riding Festival contributes approximately R20 million to the local economy and creates over 500 job opportunities. Once fully operational, the indigenous horse racing sector it is expected to generate over R100 million per annum.

202. In 2021 KwaZulu-Natal entered a three-year partnership with COSAFA to host the COSAFA Cup, COSAFA Women's Champions League Qualification Tournament and the COSAFA Beach Soccer Tournament in eThekweni.

ADDRESSING ENERGY SECURITY

203. **Honourable Chairperson**, load-shedding is a serious challenge to South Africa's economic growth, and our provincial government has taken bold action both to address the immediate crisis, and to make this existential crisis a thing of the past.

204. The Executive Council has approved the declaration of Richards Bay as the centre for handling strategic commodities in the energy sector with a project that will create more than 1000 jobs. Importantly, this focus will enable between 3000-5000MW of additional electricity to be supplied to the national grid in line with the Integrated Resource Plan.

205. **Honourable Speaker**, though load shedding will remain a challenge in the immediate future, its severity will begin to ease as some of the more targeted initiatives recently announced begin to take effect. We are currently witnessing a surge in investment that will not only address the electricity supply shortfall in years to come but will propel growth and create jobs on a higher rate of return.

206. Several key projects are being rolled out for KwaZulu-Natal to make its own contribution to resolving the crisis.

- a. Mabasa Energy has signed a lease and is waiting for the bid window for the acquisition of 3,000 MW through the Independent Power Producer Programme.
- b. Phakwe RBGP 2 and 3 are awaiting the bid window for 3,000MW of gas power through the IPP process.
- c. NFEGBE is seeking to secure gas at an earlier timeframe than envisaged in the Transnet process and has developed an alternate but more expensive process involving the use of a floating Storage and Regasification Unit.

207. As a result, RBIDZ is now exploring other methods to land gas in the Port of Richards Bay. As we undertook during SOPA last year, the Province has established its first energy storage facility under Eskom's flagship Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) project. This is based in Elandskop in Msunduzi and at Impendle.

208. This partnership between Eskom and Hyosung Heavy Industries has capacity to produce 8MW which is enough to power a small town for four hours.

209. Eskom, Tractionel and Hyosung are finalizing the procurement process for local suppliers to assist with electrical installations, cabling and fencing. The project was completed in October 2023. The following initiatives are a key part of this approach:

- a. The Richards Bay Gas to Power project consists of six gas-fired power plants of 9100MW which are the Richards Bay Power Plant 2 - RB2 (400MW);
- b. Karpowership (450MW);
- c. Nseleni Independent Floating power station-NFIPP (2800 MW);
- d. Phinda Power Plant (450 MW), Richards Bay Gas to Power Plant 3 (2000 MW), and Richards Bay (Eskom) power station (3000 MW).

210. Establishment of a Biomass factory in Donnybrook, Harry Gwala has created 35 permanent jobs and over 50 jobs during construction. The Biomass Factory produces various green products and biochar. The factory is currently in negotiation with Richards Bay Minerals (RBM) to supply them with biochar, this initiative will further create more permanent jobs. During this MTSF period EDTEA installed 84.7KWp solar PV Panels on government buildings.

211. Some of the major private sector players have also taken major steps towards green energy.

212. Toyota South Africa Motors (TSAM) Prospecton's production complex in Durban will move to 100% renewable energy by 2028, which will see an investment of more than R800 million. Around 10 MW of solar power has already been installed at the plant, with the aim of increasing that to 31 MW.

213. To achieve its 100% renewable energy goal, Toyota will roll out low carbon equipment and improve its waste management. eThekweni Metro is supporting this initiative.

214. **Honourable Speaker**, over and above the 44 generators that were donated to our province by the government of the People's Republic of China last year, we will be receiving a further 50 generators which will be distributed to schools, health facilities, provincial disaster management centres and the Office of the Premier for distribution to SMMEs across the province.

215. The Isithebe Industrial Park 6Wm Solar Power will see solar panels for provision of energy security and to off-set peak demand for Isithebe Industrial Park.

216. The RBIDZ overall investment pipeline is valued at R138 billion with majority of the value attributed to the energy related projects. At least R140 billion investments are projected to be operational by 2028, these comprise of projects in various sectors of the economy as well as energy related projects.

217. The following Alternative Energy Interventions are being implemented in eThekweni Metro with the Procurement of new 400MW Generation Capacity through IPPs.

218. eThekweni Metro has committed that by 2030, the 153 MW of wind energy, 470 MW of Solar PV, 8 MW of landfill gas, energy 11 MW of Hydropower and 5 MW from wastewater, as well as 500 MWh of grid scale storage capacity will be built.

219. **Honourable Speaker**, in August last year we hosted the BRICS Women Business Alliance Trade Conference, which brought together over 500 women-led Small Medium Enterprises, from 18 countries.

220. Today I am excited to announce that HumanInsight, in collaboration with China Grand Blue Print supported by the BRICS WBA have formed a joint venture partnership to create a transformative multidimensional Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) agriculture and energy project in eThekweni Municipality. The \$2,4 billion project is expected to create 50 000 new jobs. On the energy side the project will see the establishment of a 1 GW Solar Power Plant, beginning with a pilot phase to provide 100 to 200 MW through targeted residential installation, a development of a 10 000-hectare Marigold plantation and a processing plant for high quality Lutein production.



TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

221. **Honourable Speaker**, as undertaken in the State of the Nation Address last year, President Ramaphosa launched the Welisizwe Bailey Bridges Programme an initiative of our Departments of Transport, Public Works in partnership with the SANDF and Public Works Partnerships.

222. Under this programme 22 bridges are currently being implemented with 11 having reached completion, and the remaining 11 planned to be completed in 2023/24 Financial Year.

223. The Tongaat River Bridge on the M4 as well as all other works on P398 (M4) has been repaired, and the road was opened to traffic in December 2023.

224. The province will monitor progress on the N2/N3 national road upgrade programme. It is estimated that more than R50 billion will be spent on the upgrade programme over a period of 8 years.



225. The R5,3 billion N2 EB Cloete Interchange project was awarded in January 2023 and is anticipated to be completed in April 2028.

226. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport issued order for 55 trucks. These trucks will be allocated to all our regions to deal with pothole patching in on our entire network.

227. Regarding the rehabilitation of roads and bridges the Department of Transport is implementing 730 prioritized projects which needed urgent flood repair.

228. The department has partnered with the Independent Development Trust (IDT) and transferred R615 million to the agency to implement projects mostly in eThekweni. A total of 50 bridges are targeted to be built by the end of the 2023/2024 financial year.

- a. The Msunduzi Freeway Node Development (Sip 2) which is worth over R1 billion has created 2 922 Jobs.
- b. The N2 John Ross Interchange, worth over R21 billion, has created 56 709 Jobs.

229. In addressing the problem of potholes, the Department of Transport has procured 55 pothole patching trucks as part of accelerating our response time in fixing the problem in our road networks. They have been dispatched in all Department's District offices. As part of Sthesha Waya we have employed machine operator and road worker aids

CATALYTIC WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

230. The province will see several interventions for new water resources through exploring small new dams at Harry Gwala and uGu Districts. The borehole programme in six districts has been implemented with almost 250 completed and in operation.

231. Integrated implementation and timeous completion of water resources projects and linked rehabilitation, bulk water supply and reticulation projects for entire value chain is being fast tracked.

- a. Government has invested in the rehabilitation of Hazelmere Dam, Tugela-Goedertrouw Dam, Cwabeni Dam, Stephen Dlamini Dam and Smithfield Dam.
- b. The Refurbishment of Umthamvuna raw water pump station will benefit about 20 000 households.
- c. St Helen's Rock revamp will benefit over 106 450 households in Ugu district for almost R20 million investment.
- d. The refurbishment of sewer pumps in Newcastle, Ncade, Ayliff and Tweefontein, with R8.7m investment, is complete and will benefit over 18 500 households at Amajuba.

MACAMBINI WATER SUPPLY SCHEME

232. The Macambini Water Supply Scheme is part of long-term project that started around 2004, for the provision of clean, drinkable water to the Mandeni Municipality townships and the rural areas at the outskirts of the Mandeni Town.

233. When complete the project will benefit approximately 33 000 people providing clean drinkable water in areas of eNdondakusuka, eMangethe and eMhlabulweni, and new N2 Development (eMangeza) among others.

This is just one example of how this government has responded to the needs directing the projects where they are most needed

Government Precinct

234. On the Government Precinct, the Department of Public Works has completed the detailed designs for the three key features of the precinct being the Provincial Legislature, the Archives and Government Departments and Office of the Premier. I am pleased to report that Provincial Treasury has allocated funding during the adjustment estimates to assist in the appointment of the Transactional Advisors. As indicated, this is a multi-year project, but given the work undertaken in the past few years, we believe we can shorten the typical time taken for a PPP process by at least 40% as the majority of the groundwork has been undertaken.

KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS

235. We are excited by Transnet National Ports Authority's (TNPA's) recent announcement of the selected Terminal Operators for the development of the multi-billion mega Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Terminal and the ambitious Bunkering Fuel Terminal at the Port of Richards Bay.

236. These two projects are among a total of 31 flagship projects in progress in the Port of Richards Bay and Port of Durban under the portfolio of the KwaZulu-Natal Logistics Hub (KZNLH).

237. Not only will the KZN-LH programme see an estimated capital investment of R 155 billion injected into our province's ports, but it will also create more than 570 000 jobs and see the generation of R413 billion in new business opportunities.

Fuze Institute

238. Through a partnership between government and the Fuze Institute, a total of 28 396 learnerships will be available for the 2024/25 financial year. These include Private Pilot Licensing, Aircraft Maintenance Mechanic Engineers, Community Safety Officers, Renewable Energy Specialists, Food Handlers, Mixed farming Systems, Civil and building engineering and many others

King Dinuzulu Innovation Valley Initiative

239. **Honourable Speaker**, we have always been upfront about transforming KwaZulu-Natal into a Smart Province. To this end we have taken a bold step to establish the King Dinuzulu Innovation Valley. This is a collaborative effort between KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, Human Insights Africa, multiple technology and innovation industry leaders, to position the province as a global leader in citizen centric innovation and digital transformation.

240. Located at the Dube Tradeport, the Innovation Valley is in commemoration of the 110th Anniversary of King Dinuzulu. The Innovation Valley will be coordinated by the Office of the Premier, with the Dube Tradeport as the landlord, and the Moses Kotane Institute (MKI) playing a collaborative role. The building will be ready for occupation before the end of 2024/2025 financial year. December year.

241. While the Innovation Valley will be headquartered at the Dube Tradeport precinct, it will have direct links with all the existing Techno Hubs in our district municipalities, including eThekweni Metro.

Skills Development

242. We are excited to note that the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has approved Skills Development Funding to the tune of R123 million for the Department of Human Settlements in KwaZulu-Natal. This will benefit 2000 beneficiaries for the period of 31 months. Critically, there is a compulsory 2 percent set aside to benefit people with disabilities. More details on the roll-out will be shared by the Department of Human Settlements in due course.

243. The Department of Transport has introduced the ambitious Thuthuka Skills Development Programme that will capacitate a total of 4 000 beneficiaries with drivers' licenses from all districts, majority being youth. The Province will be launching this initiative this coming Friday, 1 March 2024.

244. Code B (known as Code 8) targets a total of 1000 beneficiaries seeking to create a pool of e-hailers. Code C1 targets a cohort of 2000 beneficiaries who are capacitated with the view to accessing employment opportunities at companies. Code EC- targets a cohort of 1 000 beneficiaries seeking to create a pool of plant operators.

245. In the Department of Social Development, a total of 600 youth were provided with Code 10 drivers licences.

246. The following are Youth Agricultural Graduates who benefitted from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

a. From CEDARA former students:

- i. **Nkanyiso Ngubane:** Co-owner of Dukathole Farm who employs 15 seasonal workers for vegetable production
- ii. Ndumiso Gule: Director of Gule Agri Consulting (PTY) LTD based in Pietermaritzburg and have footprint in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, Gauteng, North West, Limpopo and Mpumalanga
- iii. Mpilo Gcumisa: is a Founder and CEO of MSN Agric Services, a youth-led agricultural chemicals, seeds, animal feed, fertilizer and equipment supplier. MSN Agric Services has created 9 job opportunities and employed 7 youth.

b. Owen Sithole College of Agriculture former students:

- i. **Mzwandile Nhleko and Mthokozisi Nhleko:** Now, serves as Founder and CEO of MSN Agric Services, a youth-led agricultural chemicals, seeds, animal feed, fertilizer and equipment supplier. In 2023, MSN Agric Services was appointed as agro dealer for the Presidential Economic Stimulus Package (PESI) voucher programme to supply farmers with production inputs. MSN Agric Services has created 9 job opportunities and employed 7 youth.
- ii. Samkelo Thwala: He started farming with and then decided to expand his farm by adding crop production. He started supplying Boxer with spinach and a local restaurant with lettuce. Today, he has his own nursery and also sells indigenous and broiler chickens

c. Makhathini Mega Nursery youth graduates:

- i. **Siduduzo Gcwensa, Bhekani Khoza and Nonkululeko Mathe**
The above mention youth is currently benefiting from KZNDARD Agricultural Youth Graduate programme. They are placed under the Makhathini Mega Nursery producing seedlings, fruit trees and multiplying sweet potato vines. They have registered a stokvel called Makhathini Agri Xchange Stokvel, planting and supplying local wholesalers such as Spar and Jozini street vendors.

247. Through the Agricultural Producer Support programme, the DARD has benefited the following farmers: Nkonyane Piggery, Kwamalulekoes Herb Project, Isigawuli Semithi Emikhulu Layer Project, Sigananda Mahlubi Investment Beef Project, Mkhize Farm Pineapple Project, Kopjies Kraal Project, 1000 Hills Vegetables Production Project, Dhemi Farm Project, Mxolisani Nyawo, Tennyson Farm Coop Project and Nohari Farm CC.

Broadband Rollout

248. We are continuing with broadband rollout and through KZN Broadband 750 sites will be up and running by end of March 2024.

249. Universal Service and Access Agency of South Africa (USAASA) will connect 135 government facilities by end of March 2024.

SA Connect Phase 2

250. Through SA Connect phase two, 287 community sites will be connected by end of March 2024.

251. We will connect 6 867 Community WiFi Hotspots and enable over 1.2 million household connections in various districts over 3 years as follows:

- a. Year 1: 3 367 Wi-Fi hotspots will be built connecting 659 270 households. (eThekweni Metro, Harry Gwala, uMgungundlovu, uMzinyathi and uGu Districts)
- b. Year 2: 1 535 Wi-Fi hotspots will be built connecting 222 178 households. (Amajuba, iLembe and uThukela Districts)
- c. Year 3: 1 965 Wi-Fi hotspots will be built connecting 299 186 households. (King Cetshwayo, uMkhanyakude and Zululand Districts)



WORDS OF APRECIATION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

252. **Honourable Speaker**, this historic 3rd decade since our democratic transition in 1994 has been truly a momentous occasion in the history of our nation. We have used the 2024 State of the Province Address as a time for reflection on the journey thus travelled, and the distance we have covered over time. The successes of the various administrations over the past thirty years would have been impossible without these committed women and men who have walked the corridors of our democratic administration.

253. As Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, I do not stand alone in this podium, but I wish to take the opportunity to appreciate the assured support of the Leader of Government Business Hon. Siboniso Duma and the Members of the Executive Council with whom we share the responsibility of leading the people of KwaZulu- Natal.

254. Allow me at this point to acknowledge all the MPLs, Mayors, Councillors, who since 1994, have worked tirelessly to honour our commitment to build a peaceful, prosperous, united, and free KwaZulu-Natal.

255. To the Director-General, the SAPS Provincial Commissioner, Heads of Departments and all officials from the 3 spheres of Government, I thank you for your hard work which has carried this administration through the worst and the best of times.

256. These dedicated patriots worked together with all our social partners in business, organized labour, civil society, faith-based community, and the non-governmental sector.

257. Most of all I wish to pay tribute to the people of KwaZulu-Natal whose resilience and never-ending hope continues to serve as the anvil on which a new KwaZulu-Natal is being built. I also wish to state that I stand on the shoulders of the men and women, the young and old, black, and white, who fought, struggled, went to prison, and died so that we could all be free to stand here as we do today.

258. To my Family, my fountain of strength, my ever-supportive Sister and my Children, thank you. Your support is always appreciated.

259. Today, in a humble way, I trust that I have given a report that would make our forebears proud, a report that would give hope to our children that indeed tomorrow will be better than today. This report gives confidence to the unborn to enter this world because they would have realized that we have made proper arrangements to make their lives in this world to be productive, peaceful, and fulfilling.

260. This has never been about us, but about the pursuit of a noble vision to build a better world.

261. In this regard, I am reminded of the words Guinea Bissau revolutionary and theoretician, Amilcar Cabral who shared simple, yet sage advice for all of us immersed in the task of building new societies, societies characterized by peace, equality, and prosperity. He counselled that: *“We must act as if we answer to, and only answer to, our Ancestors, our children, and the unborn.”*

262. Again, today I recommit myself and our administration to that vision.

I Thank You!

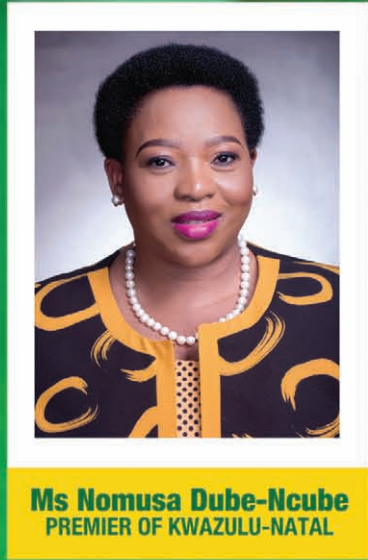








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