

SPEECH BY MEC FOR HEALTH, MS NP NKONYENI (MPL)
AT THE TARGETED ENTREPRISE DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP
CLAIRWOOD RACE COURSE
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Program Director

Head of Department, Dr Busi Nyembezi

Members of the Department of Health management team

Amakhosi here present

Distinguished guests

Members of the press

Ladies and gentlemen

I am indeed honoured to address you today on such an important occasion. Equally, I would like to thank you for accepting our invitation to come here to listen to and share ideas with us.

Ten years today, we signed one of the most important documents of our times, the Constitution of our Republic. As a country, we have one of the most progressive Constitutions in the world, a Constitution which focuses on the establishment of a non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa. We are joining as part of our country, millions of our fellow Africans in celebrating the 10th anniversary of our Constitution, which has shaped our once divided country into one of the most progressive nation in the world.

In his message at the adoption of the Constitution on behalf of the African National Congress, the president of our Republic gave one of the moving and poignant speeches of our time, which defined who we are and what we want to be. He said "Today, as a country, we keep an audible silence about these ancestors of the generations that live, fearful to admit the horror of a former deed, seeking to obliterate from our memories a cruel occurrence which, in its remembering, should teach us not and never to be inhuman again". The president further highlighted the challenges facing our turbulent times when he lamented "I have seen the destruction of all sense of self-esteem, the consequent striving to be what one is not, simply to acquire some of the benefits which those who had improved themselves as masters had ensured that they enjoy".

In 1994 we said that we wanted to deliver a better life for all. And in 1999 we entered into a People's Contract, to create work and fight poverty. In 2006, we developed a plan to make Local Government work better for the people. The Department of Health has a role to play in this through the Integrated Development Plan.

Our country has indeed entered an important age, the Age of Hope. As the president of our republic, the honourable Thabo Mbeki said "clearly, the season of hope will not be sustainable if we gloss over the specificity of our African reality; a reality that should strengthen the political, economic and social systems which we practice".

I feel indeed excited that you have all gathered here to listen to the department's vision moving forward with creating opportunities for our people. Our new slogan "Fighting diseases, fighting poverty, giving hope" attest to our serious commitment to play a meaningful role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and at the same time live up to the prescript of our founding document, the Freedom Charter.

As a country we have made a commitment to the Millennium Development Goals – among which is, the eradication of poverty and hunger and the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Over and above that we are guided firmly by National priorities and guidelines which serve to ensure that we make advanced and visible progress. The Department has 10 Key Priorities that intend to achieve in the next three years sustainable progress – chief among them is, to improve the quality of care, revitalization of hospital services and to improve resource mobilization, management of resources without neglecting the attainment of equity in resource allocation.

The Freedom Charter confronts us with an important challenge when it states that, "The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth"! When the founding fathers made this provision in the Charter, they merely referred to among other issues to the fact that;

- The national wealth of our country, the heritage of South Africans, shall be restored to the people;
- The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the Banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole;
- All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the wellbeing of the people;
- All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.

In my budget speech at the legislature on the 26 April 2006 (a day before we celebrated our freedom) I highlighted an important aspect of the president's State of the nation address where he says:

“While we must indeed celebrate the high levels of optimism that inspire our people, who are convinced that our country has entered its Age of Hope, we must also focus on and pay particular attention to the implications of those high levels of optimism with regard to what we must do together to achieve the objective of a better life for all our people. We have to respond to the hopes of the people by doing everything possible to meet their expectations”.

We intend as a department to ensure that we live through these ideals that were found to be imperative for the survival of humanity. Our new Supply Chain Management policy will ensure that we distribute our resources wide and with bias to Broad Black Empowerment.

In some districts we had an unacceptably low numbers of Co-operatives and emerging enterprises who secured tenders. This was found to be

due to ignorance regarding the tendering process, more especially pricing. Other cooperatives were overpricing, while others are under pricing. Consequently, a rigorous campaign has been scheduled whereby teams from the BEE Unit have been going out to districts to train communities on the tendering process.

We want to continue along and multiply our efforts so that we invite more people to take part in our country's wealth. We want to pledge our commitment, based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction, that we all have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and create job opportunities collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development for our people and, at the same time ensure that all our people participate actively in the economy of our province and our country.

We are investing our budget in bringing into the mainstream of our economy BEE companies and Small Medium and Micro Enterprises to provide services to our people. In line with the hospital revitalization programme, we are investing a sizeable amount of money in the rebuilding of clinics and hospitals.

Through our Service Commitment Charter, we have pledged ourselves to providing fair and accessible services and offering choices within the limitation of our resources. This is but the first step towards continuous

review and improvement of our service offering whilst using resources efficiently, effectively, and innovatively to ensure value for money. One of government's objectives is to increase the growth of businesses and to ensure their contribution to Gross Domestic Product.

The International Monetary report of 2004 observed that “the encouraging growth performance in recent years has renewed optimism that sub-Saharan Africa may be entering a period of strong and sustained expansion. Per capita income growth in sub-Saharan Africa has accelerated and become positive over the past five years - a significant improvement compared with the previous two decades when sub-Saharan Africa recorded the worst growth performance among developing country regions.”

We have been inundated with complaints from our emerging entrepreneurs who have informed us that they have not been afforded an opportunity to tender for some of the works on offer. We will be moving with speed to ensure that we bring them on board so that they can contribute to our goal of achieving a 6% economic growth rate by 2010 and to help us halve poverty by 2014.

Ladies and gentlemen, in the process of empowering our people I am aware of sinister forces which serve to discredit our Broad Black Empowerment drive through spreading malicious accusations against myself, the departmental officials and small companies that are providing service to the department. These forces contend that the department is

corrupt in its handling of the tendering process. They maintain that we are in collusion with business people to get kickbacks out of our dealings with them. There is a gossip around that I have even been instrumental in setting up meeting for some of my officials to meet with certain business people. Our meetings with individual business people and companies in a private setting are also misconstrued to mean that we are giving preferential business to them.

These forces are then telling us we need to review our approach to dealing with our people. They are telling us that we should halt our Broad Based Economic drive and leave the status quo as it is. They are telling us that our people should not have access to us to discuss their concerns and report unfair economic distribution within the department and indeed within our province. Obviously, this is not to suggest that we are immune from negative criticism in our efforts to provide opportunities for our people or adverse consequences emanating from the process of creating a better life for all. We welcome such criticism of our efforts to create opportunities for our people and we will not stop dead in the track to continue to help provide economic opportunities for emerging enterprises. Tales of wisdom from our elders have always informed us that you can never see a dog barking at a stationery vehicle. A dog always pee on a stationery vehicle and barks at a moving one. We are moving full steam ahead with our programme action of empowerment and nothing can stop us.

Notwithstanding, I have taken the decision that I will not nor will my officials meet any of our business people in private or consort with them in any manner because that will be construed as bribery and corruption. We will however welcome requests from business people who want to come to our offices in an open environment to discuss business opportunities. We want to demonstrate to the world that we are not doing anything wrong when we encourage our people to create markets for job creation.

I am aware of the fact that there are pockets of corrupt practices in the department. The recent article in the Sunday Times of corrupt activities in the department of health is cause for concern. I am aware that some business people are colluding with officials at District level by offering bribes to our officials to give them jobs within the various programs. Equally, there are others within the various areas within the department that are involved with business people.

I discouraged such practices and other forms of corrupt activities within the department. I will be making investigations into the various business units and look at the various tenders that have been allocated to some of the business people. We discourage this rampant behaviour of business people who corrupt our officials by giving them kickbacks in return for tenders in the department. We also discourage and take strong actions against our officials who accept bribes from corrupt businesses. Equally, we discourage white owned companies who use black people as

supposed shareholders in their business so that they can gain access to tenders within the department. We will be investigating all forms of tendering process and check with the registrar of companies to ensure that there is no foul play when companies bid for tenders in the department.

I make this clear and with no apologies when I say that the ruling party, the ANC will create opportunities for black people in this province, a number of which has been marginalized. The few who have had access to economic opportunities simply are not enough to claim our hard won democracy and economic emancipation. As the president of our republic and of the ANC, the honourable Thabo Mbeki said at the 90th Anniversary of the ANC, "We have striven to begin to offload the burden of poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance and underdevelopment that continue to afflict millions of our people. We have given a new impetus to our economy so that it grows and develops and addresses the needs of all our people in a more equitable manner".

Our policies should continue to address the imbalances of the past and I am certain that all of us understand very well that our policies must respond to objective reality and not perceptions of reality. It is a reality that our people continue to live in the bastion of our society amid the vast material prosperity of our economy. We want to urge you to work towards ensuring a culture of collective responsibility for the creation of opportunities for all our people.

We need all of us to acknowledge that when people are not provided with amenities for growth and development, there can never be prosperity. Poverty and abject conditions precipitated by poverty are the foundations for the spread of disease in our society. The challenges associated with health cannot be attended to by the department alone. The mobilization of communities and forging partnerships is fundamental to the achievement of providing optimal health status for all persons in KwaZulu Natal.

We will continue to mobilize our communities around healthy lifestyles initiatives. Equally, we will continue with the mobilization of social partners such as the Unions, business leaders, faith based organizations, Non-Profit organisations, Community Based organisations, youth and women organisations, traditional leaders and healers for support and care on health and other associated initiatives.

Naturally, for Africa's Season of Hope to be achieved, we have a pressing duty and need to form and strengthen partnerships with all stakeholders. This collaboration will see us making progress in fighting poverty, which is mainly the cause of diseases and at the same time, such collaboration will help us give hope to the millions of our people. We need to do this in order to achieve our objective of creating a better life for all. The late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, former president of Tanzania noted that "There is a need to remove those obstacles to the development of the poor which arise from the realities of overwhelming power external to

themselves and which have the effect (if not always the intention) of limiting their power to develop themselves in accordance with their own wishes and value systems.

I believe that with your participation in this drive we will chart a new beginning to achieve sustainable development for our province. We therefore need to take advantage of this season of hope that the president speaks of.

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of our constitution, I want to reiterate without any apology that I am an African. As the president rightly intimated that “whatever the setbacks of the moment, nothing can stop us now! Whatever the difficulties, Africa shall be at peace! However improbable it may sound to the skeptics, Africa will prosper!

Ladies and gentlemen, I must once again thank you for giving me this opportunity to put my thoughts before you on how we plan to forge ahead with creating opportunities for our people. This is in keeping with the spirit of our constitution, whose 10th anniversary we are celebrating today.

I thank you!!!