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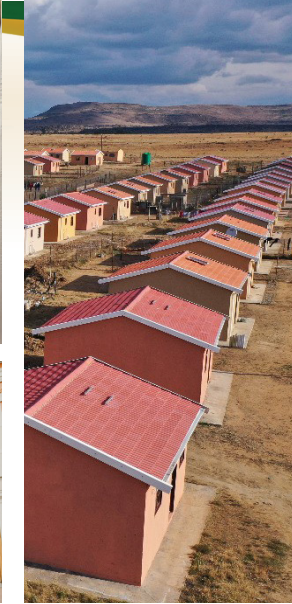


STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS

22 | FEB
2024



PREMIER
Lubabalo Oscar Mabuyane





State of the Province Address (SOPA) delivered by Eastern Cape Premier Hon. Lubabalo Oscar Mabuyane at the Provincial Legislature on February 22, 2024.

Honourable Speaker

Judge President of the Eastern Cape High Court

Members of the Executive Council

Deputy Speaker and Members of the Provincial Legislature

Members of the National Assembly

Our Former Premiers

Kings and Queens

Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps

Leaders of Provincial House and Local Houses of Traditional and Khoisan Leadership

Mayors of our Municipalities and leadership of Salga

Leaders of Political Parties, Religious Leaders, Business Leaders, Leaders of Civil Society and Labour

Director General, Heads of Departments, and other Government Officials

Esteemed Guests

Abemi bePhondo bonke abasimamele emakhaya

Good morning, goeie more, khotsong, mholweni ephondweni.

Theme: Seamless Progress in Building the Eastern Cape We Want.

Somlomo obekekileyo, sinenkqubela phambili ethungelanayo ekwakheni iPhondo leMpuma Kapa esilifunayo. Ezi ziindaba esizokwabelana ngazo nabantu beli Phondo leeNgqwele namhlanje. Sicela nisiboleke iindlebe sibeke induku ebandla kule ntetho yoBume bePhondo yokugqibela yorhulumente wesithandathu.

On the 28th of June 2019, we came before this house to table a five-year plan to build the Eastern Cape we want, following the overwhelming mandate we were given by the electorate.

Today we are back here to provide a report on how far we have progressed to fulfil our electoral mandate. **Ngeliphandle, sizokujonga umgama esiwuhambileyo ekwakheni iMpuma Kapa esiyifunayo. Mandigawule ndiwarhuqa.**

THE JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

Fellow citizens, we know too well how difficult and painful the journey to freedom was. We are survivors of apartheid; the most cruel system ever visited upon our people. But we never ceased to believe that one day we will be free. In 1994 we finally defeated the apartheid system whose brutality knew no bounds, and ushered

into power a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

As we mark 30 years of freedom and democracy, we remember some of the people who played stellar roles in our struggle for liberation. One such eminent person is the late John Langalibalele Dube. He was elected to be the first President of the governing party, the ANC at its founding conference in 1912. Today is his birthday. We are forever indebted to President John Dube for blazing a trail to liberate the people of South Africa.

The second eminent person we want to pay gratitude to is the late Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe. This unsung hero of our liberation struggle would have been 100 years old this year. We have not forgotten his invaluable contribution towards the achievement of our freedom and democracy.

We are honouring these compatriots and many other fallen activists by working hard daily to create a better life for current and future generations. We are encouraged by the words of our people like Mr. Sicelo Joni, from Tshabo Village, who is a survivor of the Bhishe Massacre.

He wrote to me and said: **“Premier we see the positive developments that freedom and democracy brought us, keep up the good work, but focus more on rural communities.”**

Your point is taken Mr. Joni, accelerating the development of all our communities, both urban and rural is exactly what we are doing.

We understand that change takes time, but already, the Eastern Cape has turned the corner into a positive socio-economic trajectory in the past 5 years.

If I was asked to go back to the day I was born and given the chance to choose the province of my birth, I would still choose to be born in this beautiful province of the Eastern Cape.

Despite our challenges, we are resilient, we are decent, and we have shown great humanity to each other in the past 5 years. We showed up to comfort the families of the children we lost in the Enyobeni Tarven incident. Together we consoled many families who lost loved ones to the COVID-19 pandemic. We marched hand in hand to demonstrate our disgust against incidents of Gender Based Violence that claimed the lives of young women such as Uyinene Mrwetyana, Leigh-andre Jegels, Nosiselo Mtebeni, and other women in our province. Similarly, we bowed our heads to acknowledge and honour many departed compatriots who contributed immensely to our struggle for liberation and social cohesion. It is these kinds of selfless acts of Ubuntu that make me proud to be a citizen of the Eastern Cape.

We rejoiced together in the past five years when our sporting heroes performed exceptionally in international sporting tournaments.

We won two Rugby World Cups. Banyana Banyana won WAFCON. A revived Bafana Bafana has just won a bronze medal in the AFCON. Our boxing stars such as Sive Nontshinga continue to fight bravely putting the Eastern Cape on the global map. Our cricket franchise Sunrisers Eastern Cape has done it again, winning the Betway Trophy for a second successive year. **Siyazingca ngani nonke bantwana bomgquba intsebenzo yenu inefuthe elihle kulutsha lweli phondo olunamaphupha okudlalela isizwe.** Together with our partners, we will continue to roll out sports equipment to schools and local clubs to nurture the talents of future sporting stars.

The outstanding achievements of our sporting heroes inspire us to turn victories on the sporting fields into victories against poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment in our province.

ADVANCING SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Honourable Speaker, when we came into office in 2019, we were tasked by the people of the Eastern Cape to do 7 things, that could help us **build the Eastern Cape want.** One of those tasks was to improve the performance of our education system.

President Oliver Tambo told us: “A nation that does not take care of its youth does not deserve its future.” One major investment that any country can make for its youth, is in education. After all, President Nelson Mandela teaches us that: “education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

30 years ago, our province faced a major challenge in terms of its education outcomes. Our matric pass rate was at 56,8% in 1994. In response to this problem, successive administrations have focused on improving our teaching and learning environment. We sustained investments in core education infrastructure by building schools, providing scholar transport, school nutrition, quality teacher training, deployment of technological solutions and the early delivery of learning and teaching material.

As a testament to the success of these efforts, the Matric Pass rate in the Eastern Cape has been on a rapid increase since 2019. With a partial decline in 2020 and 2021, we have been registering a 4% increase in the pass rate year-on-year. Accordingly, we have reached the 80% mark for the first time since 1994 by achieving an 81.4% pass rate in 2023.

Ndicela sonke siphakame sinike imbeko ekhethekileyo ngodlwabevu lwezandla abantwana beli phondo ababhale ibanga leshumi ngo 2023 kuba benze imbali.

The results we achieved for the class of 2023, would not have been possible without dedicated teachers. I am referring to teachers such as Mr Zolani Sigadi, Ms Siyamthanda Bidla and Mr Nkululeko Mtyingizane of Soqhayisa Senior Secondary in Nelson Mandela Metro. They are a team that produced the second-best maths results in the whole of South Africa.

If you were a teacher in 2011 when the class of 2023 started grade one, also pat yourself on the back because our learners came through your hands.

We can now safely say our education ecosystem is starting to function like a well-oiled machine. All progressive education stakeholders have the belief that we can achieve more. Therefore, as the proud Premier of this Province, I am again raising the bar. Let us all work together towards achieving a 90 % matric pass rate by 2030. The government is going to provide all the necessary support to our schools to get us there.

Mandiyikhankanye into yokuba esakhokhelwa yiANC urhulumente weli phondo sokuze iphele inkqubo yokuthuthwa kwabantwana nenkqubo yokutyiswa kwabo, kuba zizidingo zama waka-waka abantwana abanabazali abangathathi ntweni. Siyazi ukuba akhona amagingxigingxi kule nkqubo, kodwa siyawasombulula. Despite the challenges in this programme, from an economic transformation perspective, scholar transport has had a positive impact on transport providers in the province.

Honourable Speaker, in 1994, the province identified backlogs of 572 schools built of mud and inappropriate material. We completed the construction of 232 mud schools, while more than 200 mud schools were declared unviable and closed.

Between now and 2030, we need an estimated amount of R8 billion every year to bring all schools in our province to a conducive state for teaching and learning. But our current school infrastructure budget is R1.6 billion a year. **Ndinixelela le nto ke bantu bephondo kuba ndifuna ukucela sinyamezelane, sizakufika kuzo zonke izikolo ezifanele ukwakhiwa xa imali ivuma. Esele zakhiwe izikolo masizikhuseleni zingamoshwa.**

Since 2019, we have built close to 100 schools, giving all of them a complete makeover that our communities are proud of. **E-Alfred Nzo sakhe izikolo ezingamashumi amabini eziquka i-OR Tambo Technical High School ne Pontseng Primary School. E-OR Tambo sakhe izikolo ezingamashumi amabini anesibini eziquka iDalindyebo Senior Secondary School ne Nkululeko Ralo Senior Primary School.**

In Amathole District we built 15 schools such as Xuba Junior Secondary and Tyali High Schools. In Buffalo City, we built 3 schools including Sophathisana Secondary and Cove Ridge Primary. In Chris Hani District we built 17 schools such as Bulelani Senior Secondary and Rwantana Primary.

In Joe Gqabi District we built 9 schools such as Dinizulu Senior Secondary and Ngxaza Primary. In Nelson Mandela Metro we built 8 schools which include Noninzi Luzipho Primary and Nkululeko High. Last but not least in Sarah Baartman we built 4 schools which include Bhongweni Public Farm School and Clarkson Primary.

Fellow citizens, if anyone tells you that your government does not build schools, tell them that is not true.

The schools we are building come fully equipped with modern-day amenities such as safe ablution facilities, science and computer labs, libraries, and canteens. We urge SGBs to allow community members such as Samela Matiso who sells food outside Nkululeko High School in Kariega to utilise canteens in our schools.

Kuninzi okuhle esizokwenza ekwakheni iizikolo. Esinye sezikolo esizokuzakha kulo nyaka yi-Ulwazi High School yaseMdantsane epase ngomyinge ka 100 % into engapha kweminyaka elishumi ilandelelana. This is called rewarding education excellence.

We have been saying education is a societal matter and it is indeed. I would like to applaud all stakeholders who practically support our schools. People and companies who donate computers, uniforms, and other essentials to our schools. The four universities in our province, Rhodes, Nelson Mandela, Fort Hare, and WSU have been phenomenal, initiating programmes that support teaching and

learning in our schools. Keep up the good work Vice Chancellors and your teams.

This government has also widened access to higher education. Most of us in this house studied under very difficult conditions when our parents had to sell livestock, some vegetables and fruit to send us to university. But we have made it a point that the youth who come behind us do not face similar challenges. Since 2019, the government awarded bursaries that benefited over 5,000 young people who are studying in fields that are in line with our economic development priorities. Our bursary programme has produced pilots such as Sisipho Nofemele and Kwanele Gobo, physicians such as Dr Theresa Brummer, and actuaries such as Xabiso Ncanywa.

From this year onwards I am naming the Premier's Top Achievers Bursary Award, the Dr Soyisile Nuku Scholarship.

Dr Nuku sincerely believed in the transformative power of education, not just for individuals but for society as a whole. By naming this bursary programme after him, we honour his legacy. In this sixth administration, we also did something that had never been done before and that is paying the historical debt of students, studying in our four universities. This initiative benefited over 6,000 students who could not graduate without settling their debts.

Omnye wabo nguBouso Thiam wase Port Alfred. Uthe kum ungumntu wokuqala ukufumana isidanga kusapho lwakhe. UnguTishalakazi ngoku kwisikolo samabanga aphantsi iMsobomvu Primary eCookhouse.

In this sixth administration government also invested heavily in Higher Education infrastructure in our province, particularly in building TVET Colleges, student accommodation and lecture halls.

As we celebrate our progress, we also recognize the ongoing work we must still do. **Omnye wale misebenzi kukuphuhlisa ngakumbi inkqubo yokufundisa ngolwimi lweenkobe.** We will also heighten the rollout of digitized curriculum content. Together, let us continue to build an Eastern Cape that stands as a beacon of educational excellence.

A Healthier Eastern Cape

Fellow citizens, our philosophy of a better life for all is about building human capabilities to attain a life standard that is both productive and long. Implied in this, is the need to promote access to healthcare and encouraging healthy lifestyles. In this regard, we have worked tirelessly to improve the health profile of our province. Life expectancy for women improved from 56 years in 2001 to 67 years in 2021. Men are also living 7 years longer than they were in 2001.

We have seen a decline in new HIV infections and increased access to antiretroviral therapy. The plan going forward is to initiate newly diagnosed patients on Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ARVs) by 2025. Our analysis of the HIV and Aids 95-95-95 strategy shows good progress. In the Eastern Cape, 93 % of individuals who are living

with HIV know their status, 79% are on treatments and 92% show viral load suppression. We have to do more on health promotion, tracking and tracing of patients to increase retention in care, working with all stakeholders including civil society partners.

Access to post-natal care improved from 52% in 2019 to 82.7% in 2023. However, maternal mortality remains a concern, particularly in the hot spots zones of O.R. Tambo and the Metros. This prompted the government to establish over 500 Youth Zones across the province to increase access to Sexual Reproductive Health Services targeting the youth. As a society, we must confront teenage pregnancy and support young mothers better if we are to make significant inroads to mitigate maternal mortality.

We renewed our focus on non-communicable diseases, as mortality rates from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases pose a serious threat to the lives of our people.

Honourable Members, prostate cancer accounts for 13 % of male deaths from cancer in South Africa. I want to appeal to men, particularly men above 45 years to do prostate examinations. We are going to run a massive campaign to promote this initiative because currently it is taken for granted.

A functional healthcare system requires a reliable core infrastructure. This is why our investment in health went to building new healthcare facilities and improving existing health infrastructure mostly in townships and rural communities.

The proof of our work in the 30 years of democracy is there for everyone to see. We built a brand-new Cecelia Makhiwane Hospital in Buffalo City Municipality and Siphethu Hospital in Alfred Nzo.

Abantu base Matatiele sibakhele iKhotsong TB Hospital. Abahlali baseMbhongweni eMbizana, ilali eyasizalela uMama uWinnie Madikizela Mandela sibakhele nabo iMeje Community Health Centre. Sifikile naseFlagstaff sayakha iFlagstaff Community Health Centre. Xa sithi sinenkqubela phambili ekwakheni iMpuma Kapa esiyifunayo sitsho lo msebenzi mhle kangaka siwenzileyo ukunika abantu iinkonzo zempilo ezingcono.

Healthcare workers are essential role players in preserving life and fighting the burden of diseases. As part of our strategy to improve the output of healthcare workers in the province, we succeeded in lobbying for the establishment of a second Medical School in our Province, in Nelson Mandela University. The school admitted its third cohort of medical students this year and we can't wait to have them graduate to help us fight the burden of disease in our communities.

While we take pride in our successes, we remain mindful of the challenges in our health system. Since 2019, we have delivered 312 ambulances to our healthcare facilities to improve response times to emergencies. More will be delivered this year.

We are seeing the positive results of establishing a Specialised Litigation Unit to challenge medico-legal claims. There has been a significant reduction in the number of medico-legal claims from 600 in 2019 to 200 in 2023. We have also seen a decrease in medico litigation costs from a range of R2 billion to R450 million in 2022. We are implementing preventative measures, such as in-house cerebral palsy treatments, digitization of records, e-health services, and capacitation of health practitioners to sustain the reduction in medico-legal claims.

Honourable Members, traditional male initiation is a societal matter that upholds culture and customs; but it is now a health matter because we are losing lives. This is despite the concentrated risk-responsive interventions made by the sixth administration such as age and health assessments, parental support, screening of traditional surgeons, quality assurance of initiation schools, and safety. Government will continue to support communities by mobilizing all social partners to take responsibility for this important rite of passage for boys to manhood. Wrongdoers from families and practitioners will never be spared when they mismanage this practice.

Our journey towards a healthier Eastern Cape is ongoing and it requires continuous dedication and collaboration. Our collective resolve must not wither.

Human Shelter

Honourable Speaker, a central tenet of our liberation struggle was to give human dignity to all our people, including the pursuit of decent living. This includes promoting access to formal housing for all households. In this regard, we worked tirelessly over the past 30 years to provide houses and housing subsidies to a large number of our people. As a result, Eastern Cape households who reside in formal dwellings significantly increased from 48% in 1996 to 83.6% in 2022.

We upgraded 115 informal settlements benefiting 57,000 households in the past five years. A good example of our work on upgrading informal settlements is the Dacower Informal Settlement in Mdantsane, which we completely transformed into a formal housing settlement.

We also built 24,000 houses in the past five years. As a result, families in urban and rural areas now have proper shelter over their heads. I was in Kartberg late last year to hand over keys to brand-new houses we built for 180 families who were displaced from a farm. The tears of joy shed by old people in that community were very touching.

Building Safer Communities

Honourable Speaker, crime is disturbing the peace in our communities. If you are a government official who asks for kickbacks from service providers, you are committing a crime. **Xa umntana wakho efika nomlenze wenkomo ebiweyo niwufake embizeni, nenza ulwaphulo mthetho. Xa uphakamisa isandla kwiqabane lakho wenza ulwaphulo mthetho. Ndiyabacebisa ke abantu abenza ezi zinto baziyeke, kuba liyatsha ibhayi kubaphuli mthetho.** Over the past five years, 16,000 people, were arrested for sexual offences. More than 12,400 of those people were convicted. We are doubling our efforts to defeat the scourge of GBVF-related crimes. Similarly, we are not taking lightly the violence and discrimination against the LGTQIA+ community. **Nabo banamalungelo mabangahlukunyezwa.**

Amasela emfuyo angonwabisanga abantu kwiilali zethu nawo siyawabamba. More than 2000 people were arrested for stock theft with 700 convicted in the past five years. To combat the scourge of stock theft we will be rolling out the Livestock Identification and Traceability System in villages and farms that are prone to stock theft.

We have seen a surge in crimes such as cable theft, tempering with water systems, hijacking of trucks, and interruption of construction projects. We have asked the national government to consider reinforcing the police to protect major construction sites.

Our Road Freight and Logistics Industry Task Team confiscated counterfeit food and clothing items; illegal and unauthorized medicines; and prohibited cigarettes. We are intensifying these operations.

Furthermore, we are responding to the troubling trend of gun violence that is threatening the safety and security of communities in the province. So far 3000 stolen, lost, or illegal firearms have been recovered in our province only in the past three years. We strengthened the capacity of the police by hiring 3,400 police officers. We urge our communities to embrace the police officers and to collaborate with them to push back against crime.

In the past, criminal cases took longer to complete because of delays in forensic investigations, ranging from DNA to ballistics tests. To improve this situation government built a Forensic Science Laboratory in Gqeberha. Since it started operations the Forensic Science Laboratory has received 56,000 samples of DNA, fingerprints, and ballistics. **To those who rape, those who shoot people with firearms, those who steal other people's property, and those who sell drugs, science is going to help us catch you.**

Let me applaud members of the provincial SAPS team for winning national awards of excellence in various policing categories. Their efforts in serving and protecting our communities are commendable.

Comprehensive Social Security

Honourable Speaker, whilst the levels of malnutrition remain high, there has been a drop in the fatality rate due to Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) from 11.8% in 2017 to 7% in 2022.

We attribute this drop to inter-sectoral collaboration between the government and relevant stakeholders to tackle child malnutrition. However, we have noted concerns raised by the South African Human Rights Commission in their recent report on Child Malnutrition and the Right to Food. As an intervention to address the concerns raised in the Human Rights Commission report, we are investing R60 million to support 30,000 vulnerable households in Anti-Poverty sites.

Kodwa ke masitsho ukuba ukusuka ngo1994, urhulumente oko ethe gqolo ngeenkqubo zokulwa indlala. These include the Child Support Grants (CSG) which benefit more than 2 million children, and the school nutrition which we have expanded to two meals a day. We have also supplied more than 100,000 families with food production inputs to build household capacity to produce food.

TRANSFORMING THE ECONOMY TO SERVE THE PEOPLE

Honourable Speaker, growing the economy of the province is another important task we were given by our people. Before 1994, our provincial economy was characterized by

exclusion and discrimination, including the spatial trap of being a labour-sending province. In this democratic dispensation, we have sought to build an inclusive economy that reverses this profile and provides opportunities to all citizens irrespective of gender, race, colour, or creed.

Our economy is still not growing at the rate we want, to create enough jobs. As a result, many people of working age remain unemployed. Poverty remains a lived experience of many families, despite the government's expanded social relief interventions. Our economic situation has not been helped by challenges of energy supply, the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, and geopolitical conflicts we had to contend with in the past 5 years.

However, there is a silver lining in our provincial economy. In the past three years, the Eastern Cape economy recovered to pre-COVID-19 pandemic growth levels. Our GDP was R362 billion in 2019. It took a knock in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 but recovered to R365 billion in 2022. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, we established a Jobs Fund to protect jobs threatened by the subdued economic climate. We protected 6000 jobs by supporting 202 companies that were on the brink of retrenching workers.

The unemployment rate in the Eastern Cape has been on a consistent decline from 45.8 % in the third quarter of 2020 to 38.8 % in the third quarter of 2023.

Together with our private sector partners, we created 246,000 permanent jobs for our people in the same period. In addition, government created more than 400,000 work opportunities through the Expanded Public Works Programme. Having said that, we note with concern the job losses reported by Stats SA two days ago for the last quarter of 2023. This is a setback, but we remain resolute in implementing our economic recovery plan to reduce unemployment.

Somlomo, ngumnqweno wethu ukuba wonke umntu ofuna umsebenzi awufumane, akwazi ukuziphilisa, ondle nosapho lwakhe. Ukuphumeza lo mnqweno, sibene phulo lokutsala abatyali mali kule minyaka mihlanu, kuba abatyali mali badala amathuba amatsha emisebenzi.

Kuluvuyo ukwazisa abantu bephondo ukuba umzamo wethu ubeyimpumelelo kuba sitsale abatyali zimali abangamashumi amathathu ananye.

The investors we attracted injected a combined R173 billion into our provincial economy to open new business operations and expansion of existing operations. This means businesses will continue to hire more people and invest more money into our economy. In short, this is a sign of a better tomorrow.

Pillars of the Eastern Cape Economy

Traditionally, the strength of our provincial economy lies in the manufacturing sector. The manufacturing sector created 16,900 jobs for our people. Most of those jobs were created by the automotive industry. We are grateful to all the captains of the auto industry who are with us today, for making business decisions that favour our province.

In the past five years, our Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), Mercedes Benz South Africa, Volkswagen Group Africa, Isuzu, and Ford collectively invested over **R22 billion** for plant expansions to continue producing high-end quality vehicles that are mostly built for the export market. The impact of those investments is a contribution to our GDP and job security for the people working in those plants and in the firms of component suppliers.

We have now added the Stellantis Group to our OEM family. The Stellantis Group is injecting a massive **R3 billion** into the Eastern Cape economy. The impact of that investment will be felt by the 1500 new employees who will be hired to produce cars in a new factory that will be built in Gqeberha this year. **Lungelani la mathuba emisebenzi bantu bakuthi azakufika kuni kungekudala.** This is one of the reasons we say **we are making seamless progress in building the Eastern Cape we want.**

We are extremely excited about the future of the auto industry in our province, and we want to dismiss any notion that we are at risk of losing our OEMs. VW has just announced that they will be bringing three new models to South Africa. Mercedes Benz recently announced R100 million investment for the second phase of solar panels to deal with the impact of load shedding in their East London plant. We celebrate Isuzu as the only black-managed OEM-producing vehicles that are exported to the continent. On that note let me acknowledge the CEO of Isuzu Mr Billy Tom, for being elected the first Black President of the National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa since its establishment in 1935. **Ngunyana weliphondo owazalelwa eAlexandria ke lowo.** We greatly welcome all these new developments as they cement the commitment of the auto industry in our province.

Let me bring to the attention of the house that this year the auto industry is celebrating 100 years of existence in South Africa. Ford was the first company to produce cars in Africa, when they opened an assembly plant in 1924, in Gqeberha. One hundred years later, our province is home to MBSA, VW, Isuzu, Ford, FAW, and more than 118 component suppliers. The impact of these OEMs and component suppliers is that they provide livelihood to 60,000 people in our province and produce 56 % of the cars that South Africa exports to international markets. **There is no other province in South Africa that manufactures cars as we do.**

In our last SOPA, we committed to assist 300-panel beaters and mechanics over the next three years to access markets from the government fleet and the insurance industry. We are happy to report that we have identified 73 panel beaters thus far, from across all Districts. We will, in the new financial year, avail funding to buy the identified panel beaters equipment such as hoisters and diagnostic tools so that they can be integrated into the automotive industry value chain. The impact of this progressive programme will be the creation of jobs for mechanics in townships and small towns. But for them to grow and be self-sustainable businesses, we must support them by taking our cars to them for repairs. **Kaloku intaka yakha ngoboya benye.**

We also committed to install 13 electric vehicle charging stations in Komani, Makhanda, Mthatha, Khowa, Maletswai, East London, eQonce, Willowmore, Stormsriver, and Cookhouse. The vehicle charging stations will be online by May 2024, and this will ensure that motorists who drive EVs will be able to charge their vehicles in our province.

Re-industrialization

Honourable Members, after the dawn of democracy in 1994, the ANC-led government adopted progressive policies that favoured re-industrialisation to stimulate economic growth.

As a result, we established Coega in 1999 and ELIDZ in 2004. Both Special Economic Zones host a combined 83 businesses, employing 14000 people. **That is seamless progress in building the Eastern Cape we want.**

We appreciate the growth that these two SEZs have achieved. The last five years have seen significant growth with the ELIDZ signing 24 investors with an investment value of R5,7 billion. Whilst the bulk of these industries have been in the automotive, agro-processing, and general manufacturing sectors, the trajectory of the renewable energy sector investment has been phenomenal in the last five years. Bushveld Electrolyte is operational, and Thezilanga is getting ready to turn the sod in Ntabazuko (Berlin) for a 50MW photovoltaic solar plant. Most exciting, however, has been the growth in export-oriented manufacturing in ELIDZ which exported over R3 billion worth of products in a period of 12 months.

Through Coega we are making good progress in operationalizing 57 signed investments that are crucial for job creation. We will soon break ground for the construction of a new factory for the Stellantis Group. Projects to look forward to in the Coega SEZ include the Tyre Energy Extraction project, the planned Data Centre, the Hive Green Ammonia project, the Mulilo Power Plant, and the HealthCann Cannabis Facility.

We are working hard to improve agility in policy certainty and to reduce red tape to stimulate investment attraction in our SEZs.

We are transforming the eastern side of the Eastern Cape with both the Wild Coast SEZ and the Eastern Seaboard developments gaining momentum and traction. The Eastern Seaboard will ensure the processing of products at the Wild Coast SEZ. This will be logistically enabled by the N2 Wild Coast Road and small harbour developments in Port St Johns.

Industrial Parks

Manufacturing is happening in our **5** Industrial Parks, which are in Dimbaza, Fort Jackson, Vulindlela, Butterworth, and Komani. Since 2019 we have invested **R495 million** for infrastructure upgrades in these parks to make them more attractive to investors. These industrial parks are spaces where black industrialists such as Chemin Chemical Technology Incubator based in Fort Jackson Industrial Park thrive. More than **2000** people are employed in our industrial parks.

Our long-term plan is to turn Dimbaza Industrial Park into a multi-user complex, with an element of shopping zones, and incubators. In Fort Jackson, we are supporting a tenant looking to expand operations with a new state-of-the-art facility which will lead to an additional 600 jobs. In Butterworth, we are focussing on after-market automotive initiatives.

We have also started compacts with King Hintsa and Lovedale TVET Colleges to use our industrial parks for training and development of practical skills for students.

Agricultural industry

Honourable Speaker, as I earlier indicated, the strength of our provincial economy rests in the manufacturing sector. This does not discount the potential of other sectors as growth fronts for the future. A decade ago, we decided to diversify our economy, to complement the good impact of the manufacturing sector in employment creation.

We identified agriculture as a potential growth sector, and we have been proven right. The first good news we wish to share about the agricultural sector is that it created 38,600 jobs in the past 4 years. Those numbers reflect parents who can put food on the table for their families and buy their children clothes and other essentials. We appreciate the efforts of commercial and smallholder farmers in this job creation drive.

It has been our goal to create a new cohort of black commercial farmers, but we faced the challenge of a lack of productive land. Before 1994, large tracts of productive land were only owned by our fellow white compatriots, with black people nonexistent in the commercial agriculture space. Since the dawn of democracy,

we have been working hard to reverse this tragedy of our history, because land is the primary factor of production.

As a result, since 1994 we have distributed a total of 561,000 hectares of land to our people. **Ifuthe lale nkqubo kukuba ngenxa yalo rhulumente iifama ezingamakhulu asibhozo anamashumi amahlanu anesine (854 farms) zisezandleni zamafama amnyama kwizithili zonke.** The distribution of these farms covers the demographics of our province fairly, with youth, women, and farm workers as the main beneficiaries. **Indeed, we are sharing the land among those who work it, as the Freedom Charter directed us to do.**

Kuyasetyenzwa kwezo fama kudalwa amathuba emisebenzi, kukhutshwa nemveliso eya kumazwe aphesheya kolwandle. Siyakhuthazeka xa sibona umsebenzi omhle nokuzimisela kwamafama afana noMama uVuyokazi Tenza waseMatatiele, ongumfama ophume izandla weegusha neenkomo zenyama. Her sterling work in farming brought her accolades such as the Presidential Award in 2022, the Women Entrepreneur Award and the MTN Jump Starter Award in 2023. **Ukwanda kwaliwa ngumthakathi. Mama uTenza siyazingca ngegalelo lakho kuqoqosho.**

Siyavuma ukuba ezinye iifama esizinikezeleyo ebantwini azinamveliso. Together with our commodity and private sector partners, we will unlock an estimated R220 million grant in partnership with the Land Commission.

To ensure the security of tenure, Minister Thoko Didiza has already commenced consultations to transfer title deeds to deserving land reform beneficiaries. This will enable them to use their assets to leverage investments, to make their farms productive.

Honourable Speaker, we do not allocate farms to our people and fold our arms afterwards, we support farmers. In the past five years, the government completed a total of 905 agricultural infrastructure projects which included fencing of productive lands, stock-water systems, dipping tanks, stock-handling facilities, and sheds. These projects supported 33,700 smallholder farmers and created 4,900 more jobs.

We have gone big on providing farmers with animals to improve the quality of their livestock. More than 1,400 livestock which include cows, sheep, and goats were delivered to our communities benefiting 163 livestock enterprises. This year, we plan to distribute about 800 various breeds of livestock to farms owned by youth, women, and persons with disabilities. Each bull, heifer, sheep, and goat we give to farmers represents building blocks towards a more prosperous and sustainable agricultural sector in the Eastern Cape.

Our agricultural sector has shown resilience and was the only sector that grew during the COVID-19 period. The commercial provincial agricultural income has grown significantly in the last 15 years with the highest growth recorded between 2007 and 2017 where the income grew from R5,6 billion to R27 billion.

Because of our investments in building shearing sheds in communal areas, wool production in areas such as Dutywa doubled from 2 million tons in 2004 to 5.5 million tons in 2021. In monetary terms, this means income increased from R18 million to more than R250 million in the same period. Our support for citrus farmers has led to an increase in the total value of citrus exported from our province, from R4.1 billion in 2021 to R4.7 billion in 2022.

Our investment in feedlots has yielded an increase of 4.5 million tons of meat exports from our province to Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, which has resulted in an income of R317 million. Maize production in the Eastern Cape has more than doubled over the last 5 years, from 93 200 tons in 2018 to more than 198 600 tons in 2022. Between 2021 and 2022, the province saw a significant increase in commercial grain production from 20,000 hectares to more than 31,700 hectares.

Konke oku kuyasincumisa kakhulu kuba bubutyebi kumafama, nengeniso encomekayo kuqoqosho lweli phondo. This is a clear indication that the implementation of our Agricultural Transformation Strategy is gaining momentum.

In the past five years, we have ventured robustly into economic diplomacy. As a result, we solidified our existing twinning agreements with partner countries but also formed new partnerships with countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, and UAE to attract new investors and unlock export markets for all our sectors.

We are forging ahead in ensuring that our province takes up opportunities provided through the African Continental Trade Free Area (AfCFTA) to advance the competitiveness of the province and to expand access to African markets.

We welcome and celebrate the reappointment of the son of this province, H.E Mr Wamkele Mene as the Secretary General of AfCFTA.

Tourism industry

Somlomo, mde umgama esiwuhambileyo ekuphuhliseni ezokhenketho kweli phondo. Abantu baya kukhumbula ukuba sisuka kwimeko yobandlululo, apho abantu abamnyama babengavunyelwa bangene kumaziko ezokhenketho. The ANC-led government changed all that in 1994, by opening access to tourism products for the enjoyment of all citizens. That is the kind of Eastern Cape we want, a non-racial Eastern Cape.

Like other sectors of our economy, our tourism and hospitality sector was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic because people could not travel. That affected tourism establishments and their employees immensely. The government stepped up to the plate by offering relief packages which benefited 484 tourism businesses. The impact of that relief package is that tourism businesses covered their loss of income.

The good news we are bringing to the people of our province is that the tourism and hospitality sector has since recovered. We have achieved significant growth.

In 2019 we had 2,1 million domestic trips undertaken into the province and this grew to 5.8 million in 2022. The impact of these domestic tourist numbers has translated into a substantial GDP contribution that exceeded R8 billion. This relates to spending by tourists while holidaying in our province. We appreciate South Africans who take Shot Left trips in our province. With your trips, you contribute to job creation in the communities where our tourism products are located. **The Eastern Cape is yours to explore!**

We also recognize the role of modern infrastructure in attracting tourists to our province. Working with our private sector partners, we invested in various infrastructure projects such as chalets and viewing decks to enhance the attractiveness of our province.

It is also worth mentioning that we have seen tremendous transformation in the tourism sector. Currently, we have close to 700 graded tourism products in the Eastern Cape and 370 are owned by Previously Disadvantaged Individuals. Ms Nolufefe Nozozo who owns Pondo Adventures in Port St Johns is a good story of tourism transformation. The tourism growth point for the future is cultural heritage diversity and this is our comparative advantage.

We must highlight though that we are not doing as well as we should in attracting international tourists to our province.

The main reason for this is that we are a long-haul destination for international tourists. Going forward we will ensure that The King Dawid Stuurman Airport lives up to its international airport status. This is a goal we are going to pursue and accomplish in the seventh administration.

We remain unwavering in our commitment to conservation management. Between 2019 and 2023, 40 rhinos have been moved into our custodianship. It is this performance record that has earned our province R65 million from the World Bank to fund other conservation programmes in Great Fish Nature Reserve and Addo Elephant Park.

Retail and Trade Sector

The retail and trade sector is growing in leaps and bounds in our province. In the past four years, this sector created 31,000 jobs. Our goal is to forge deeper partnerships with supermarket groups in retail, to continue building warehouses and distribution centres across the province. This will help us to integrate local communities into the retail sector value chain.

We initiated the Small-Town Revitalisation Programme to stimulate economic activity in our small towns. Through this programme, we upgraded the socio-economic infrastructure such as roads, taxi

ranks, construction of vehicle testing centres and installation of high mast lights in areas with high incidents of GBVF. We have seen good returns on our investment as we realised the creation of more than 8,600 jobs. We appreciate the private sector investments anchored by SEFA and various Banks in Fort Jackson, Bika, Ndabakazi, Sterkspruit, Cradock, Magxaki, Libode and Lusikisiki. All of this contributes to rural and township development.

Creative sector

A sector that is emerging in our province is the creative sector. Our province is slowly proving itself as a destination for film production. Since 2018, we invested **R39 million** in 25 film projects. The impact of our investment is that the film projects have attracted an investment revenue of **R499 million** rands into our province, creating employment for over **8,400** people – mostly the youth and benefitting a total of 690 small businesses.

Honourable Members, through these film projects young people such as Lona Bawuti had a platform to showcase their creative talents. We are going to double our investment in film projects.

We have also supported two films; The Queenstown Kings and Wild is the Wind. These film projects showcased a variety of locations that our beautiful province has to offer. We attracted international film productions such as **Mission Impossible** and

the **Tempting Fortunes** reality show, which shot scenes in Alfred Nzo and Amathole District respectively.

While we celebrate progress achieved in the film industry, we want to acknowledge local musicians and other artists who continue to fly the Eastern Cape flag high on national and international stages. It was during this term when Zozibini Tunzi made us proud by winning the Miss Universe Title. Bethusile Mcinga won a Metro FM award and Pearl Kwezi who secured a leading role in the internationally acclaimed theatre production of The Lion King on Broadway, New York.

Support to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)

Honourable Speaker, we are strong believers in small businesses as a vehicle to grow our economy and create jobs. Before 1994, there was no financial support nor policies to affirm black-owned businesses. The ANC-led government changed all that in 1994 and created enabling policies to transform the economy. In our province, we have a Local Economic Development Procurement Framework which directs the government to spend 50 % of its budget on Eastern Cape-based service providers because they create jobs locally. As we speak the provincial procurement spend on Eastern Cape-based service providers is at 54.4%. We are a government that sees its business sector as a partner for development.

In the past five years, the government provided business loans to over 500 small enterprises. We augmented these loans with financial incentives which benefited enterprises and cooperatives.

We are honoured to be joined in this house today by Mr. Thabo Somlota and Mr. Mzimasi Jalisa who represent Farm Produce Co-operative and JayJay Primary co-operatives, respectively. They are part of cooperatives that benefited from government financial incentives and have created a combined 1500 job opportunities in their communities.

Interventions for Youth Development

Fellow Citizens, the efforts we are making to grow our economy are meant to benefit all our people, particularly young people. Research findings tell us that in our province unemployment mostly affects young people particularly the youth Not in Employment, Education, or Training.

When we started this term, we were not happy with the investment footprint of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) in our province. That has all changed because 13 SETAs have trained more than 29,000 young people through various skills programmes in the past three years.

Young people have been equipped with skills of the future in automotive assembly, renewable energy, digital forensics, and cloud computing. In the coming month of April, we will be launching the MerSETA Mega Skills Project which will benefit more than 10,000 young people.

In collaboration with various partners, we also trained more than 8000 young people in skills such as animal and vegetable production, cellphone repairs, beautification, and early childhood development. The disability sector should be happy to hear that of the 8000 young people trained, 700 are youth with disabilities. This number is set to increase as we implement further partnerships with the disability sector to train young people in artisanal skills.

Speaker, government has made and will continue making interventions to curb youth unemployment. The Presidential Youth Employment Initiative alone created 172,000 jobs in our province for young people who worked as education assistants and reading champions in our schools.

The young people of our province are big dreamers with brilliant business ideas. We need to unleash their potential to be the best in what they do. That is why we supported 2,700 young entrepreneurs to realize their dreams in this sixth administration.

Let me acknowledge that the processing of applications for Isiqalo Youth Fund has been very slow. **Mandiyixolisele loo nto bantu abatsha, siyayilungisa.** The latest development is that communication is now being sent to successful applicants and ultimately all those who applied will be provided with feedback.

We don't stop at funding youth-owned enterprises, we also provide opportunities for young people to trade with government. As a result, in the past five years, government spent R2.8 billion on Eastern Cape-based youth-owned businesses.

There are no sectors that are out of reach to our youth. Many young people are taking the agricultural sector by storm. As we speak 13,000 youth-led enterprises, including cooperatives within the agricultural sector, received government support. **Ndithetha ngabantu abatsha abafana noDintle Maphala waseMakalakang Village eSterkspruit.** I am challenging young people in other rural communities to organize themselves into cooperatives, government will provide the necessary support.

Economic Enablers

Honourable Speaker, we have now learned that to realize the goal of growing our economy, we need to pay special attention to our economic enablers which are government-mandated activities. Our investment in infrastructure is important for economic growth and job creation. This is because adequate public infrastructure helps

to crowd in private sector investments and improve productivity. It is for this reason that we are aiming to significantly increase our investment in industrial infrastructure. This infrastructure combines road networks, rail, ports, energy, water systems, telecommunications, and innovation capacities.

The construction sector has created **15 600** jobs in our province in the past four years. Whichever direction you enter the Eastern Cape, you will find construction workers busy expanding our provincial and national road network, which is a good sign of progress, given where we come from. We are building new trade routes to transform the spatial profile of our provincial economy. Our objective is to break the colonial pathway by which the Eastern Cape is integrated into the national economy.

Construction of the Msikaba Bridge in OR Tambo District is at 60 % completion, and we are confident it will be fully completed by 2025. In the same vein, construction of the Mtentu Bridge in Alfred Nzo District resumed in December 2023 and is scheduled for completion in 2027. These two mega projects have special meaning to us because they are located in two of the most impoverished and underdeveloped Districts of our province. Their construction is already changing the lives of our people in Alfred Nzo and OR Tambo in unimaginable ways. In addition, 7 road projects that lead to the two mega bridges will be upgraded from gravel to tarred surfaces in villages across eMampondweni.

In the past five years, the national road agency committed R28.5 billion for road construction projects in all our Districts and Metros. By the end of this year, motorists in our province will experience the thrill of driving on a world-class road interchange that is under construction on the N2 near Breibach in the Buffalo City Metro.

The construction of the Ndabakazi interchange in Amathole District has started. The Cradock to Hofmeyr road in Chris Hani district is under construction. Phase 1 of the Motherwell to Addo Road is also underway in Sarah Baartman. Same as the roads from Aliwal North to Barkly East, Elliot to Eugie, Matatiele to Kokstad and the road from Bhisho to Qumrha. We are mentioning just these few as examples of the projects under construction to demonstrate to our people that in all corners of our province, there is road construction happening to improve access to social and economic centres.

Let me now talk about rural roads as they enable access to schools, health facilities, and economic centres for our communities. The majority of our roads are gravel roads. Due to climate change which comes with floods, the work that is done on gravel roads is washed away. Some of the yellow plant items that we committed to buy have arrived and will be deployed to municipalities because they are closer to communities. Government will buy more plant items in the coming years to increase the capacity of maintaining gravel roads.

A major concern for this administration has been the rural bridges that are washed away by floods. They pose a risk to human life. We plan to build 36 bridges under the Welisizwe Bridges Programme. The construction of the first 19 rural bailey bridges in Alfred Nzo, OR Tambo and Amathole Districts has started and will be completed within the next six months. This will be followed by the construction of 17 additional bridges in Joe Gqabi and Chris Hani.

Rail is also an important part of our logistics infrastructure. We already invested and relaunched one of our branch lines to connect and improve freight movement between the two Metros. The government has activated the south corridor between Silverton in Tshwane and Gqeberha which is critical for automotive, manganese and container exports.

There are plans underway to establish a long-term dedicated manganese facility in the Port of Ngqura with a capacity of 16 million tons. This will be reinforced by the additional capacity being built in the Port of East London as a second channel for manganese exports. Already in the months of October and November last year, the Port of East London received two export manganese vessels.

Our **ports** are the biggest instrument for attracting investors in the province. We are reaping the rewards of the Capex investment allocated by Transnet over 7 years for infrastructure development projects in the Ports of East London, Gqeberha, and Ngqura.

Our ports are also vital for our agricultural exports. The good news for our farming community in the Sundays River Valley is that the Mediterranean Shipping Company announced it is launching an additional direct export cargo service from the Port of Ngqura to Northern Europe.

Water provision in our province is not only a priority for citizens but also for businesses. That is why we did not give up our pursuit of the catalytic Mzimvubu Dam Water Project. It will add a whole new dimension to socio-economic development in the Joe Gqabi, OR Tambo and Alfred Nzo Districts. The Mzimvubu Dam Water Project has since been reconfigured and we expect the construction of the Ntabelanga Dam to start in April 2024. Enabling infrastructure projects which entail the construction of a 16 km access road to the Ntabelanga Dam site is 76 % complete.

We have also implemented Regional Bulk Water and Sanitation infrastructure projects, with 18 completed and 14 under construction. We extended the Nooitgadaagt treatment plant by 70 megalitres per day and now it delivers 210 megalitres per day giving relief to residents of Nelson Mandela Metro.

Speaker, the importance of water to citizens fulfills the basic right of human dignity. Before 1994, most of our people had no access to clean drinking water. Progressively, we changed that situation in the democratic dispensation. Today, 68 % of households in the Eastern Cape have access to piped water.

BesiseXhora kulo nyaka uphelileyo sisungula iphulo lamanzi elixhanyulwa ngabantu beelali ezingaphezulu kwekhulu ezifana neGonco, Mbotyi, neHobeni. Siyile naseNtsika Yethu sasungula elinye iphulo lamanzi elixhanyulwa ngamakhaya angamakhulu amane kwiilali ezintathu, iQwebe-Qwebe, Ku-MayanakuZwedala. Kanti naseTsomobesiyile noMongameli uRamaphosa sanikizela ngelinye iphulo elisa amanzi ebantwini.

All of this good work indicates that access to clean drinking water is no longer a dream but a lived reality for our people. We will work with municipalities to ramp up the reticulation of water going forward to ensure more communities have access. We welcome the publishing of the gazette by the Minister of Water and Sanitation, which enabled the extension of the area of operation of Amatola Water to the whole province.

We have been innovative in providing water, with 17 community Spring Water Projects launched, benefiting over 4000 households. Zweledinga Village in Whittlesea is one of the communities that have recently been provided with access to clean spring water.

As we all know sanitation is dignity, our province recorded the greatest improvement in the number of households with access to sanitation in South Africa with an increase from 58.3% to 91.7%.

Energy supply has come into sharp focus in the recent past, with load-shedding taking centre stage. The Eastern Cape is developing over 11,400 megawatts of Wind, Solar, Battery Storage and Gas to Power projects that have initiated or finalized environmental impact assessments.

Without the development of new transmission lines and grid network capacity, we will not be able to wheel into the grid the 11,400 megawatts of potential capacity. In recognition of this constraint, Eskom has developed an updated Transmission Grid Development Plan for the period 2023 to 2032. The most important investment in this regard is the upgrade of the Gamma Grassridge transmission line which stretches from Gqeberha to the Northern Cape.

We welcome the call to revive nuclear energy investment in South Africa to support our sustainable baseload generation capabilities. In short, our province is working closely with the national government to find solutions for the energy supply in our province.

Despite the challenges of loadshedding we continued to connect many households with electricity. In 2011, 75 % of households in our province had electricity. Today, 95 % of households have access to electricity. Through the Integrated National Electrification Programme (INEP) government has connected electricity to 112,000 households in the past five years. **Abantu beelali ezifana neLower Rabhula, iLikhentlane kunye neLuheweni banombane namhlanje.**

This programme has also benefited schools, and clinics and will stimulate economic activities in the communities.

STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Honourable Members, let us now deal with issues of governance because we have sought to create an effective, efficient, and accountable state in the past five years. In 2011, none of our departments obtained a clean audit outcome. However, in 2022/23, eight departments obtained clean audit outcomes.

Again in 2011, none of our public entities obtained a clean audit outcome but in 2022/23, seven public entities had clean audit outcomes. We reduced municipalities with disclaimers from 17 in 2011 to 3 in 2022/23.

This achievement is important in restoring public trust and has been made possible through the implementation of audit improvement plans in line with the Auditor General's recommendations.

We have also ramped up efforts to clamp down on conflict-of-interest matters. The SIU referred 164 affected officials to the NPA and 58 for disciplinary action within their institutions. Illegal contracts worth more than R200 million were set aside. There have been positive outcomes of investigations that have led to consequence management measures, such as criminal convictions, demotions, and dismissals of officials implicated in fraud and corruption.

Honourable Speaker, digital infrastructure is vital to make government services and information easily accessible to communities. We are also pursuing the vision of a government-wide integrated information management system. We are doing this through the implementation of the broadband and other internet connectivity projects by agencies such as SA Connect, and USASSA targeting schools and hospitals.

The impact of these projects is that our children in townships and rural schools can access the internet, and hospitals can digitize operations. As we speak eMaXesibeni, 500 households in villages such as Santombe and Dutyini have internet access. We appreciate the investments made by Vodacom, and MTN to improve the communication network in our province, particularly in rural areas.

Honourable Speaker, for quite some time our municipalities had challenges in infrastructure delivery. Last year, we announced a Risk-Adjusted Strategy to help municipalities develop the capacity for speedy delivery of infrastructure projects and prevent poor expenditure. For the first time this year in the history of our province, 28 municipalities have spent more than the set threshold of 60 %, of their infrastructure grant thus making all 28 municipalities eligible for additional funding. I appeal to the municipalities to use the additional funding prudently to improve internal roads, clean communities and improve other services they offer to residents.

Honourable Members, Traditional Leaders remain a formidable partner in support of our efforts of, cooperative governance, social cohesion, and economic development. In every social or economic development matter, traditional leaders must be involved from the onset. Government prioritised the efforts of recognising traditional leaders, amongst them is **iKumkani YamaMpondomise, ohloniphekileyo uZwelozuko Matiwane kunye noomama abafana noNkosi uNokhanyo Mathandela weNqila iMathandela eMatatiele.**

We are concerned by instances where disputes emerge over the recognition of traditional leaders. In response to these instances, we have set up the Investigative Committee on Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims in terms of the Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Act 3 of 2019. We urge traditional leaders to utilise this platform to resolve disputes. **Sifuna ubukhosi obuzinzileyo, kuzokuzinza ukuhlala nesizwe.**

Honourable Speaker, intellectual revolutionary poet, Amilcar Cabral once said “Always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children”. What we have just shared with the people of our province today is our seamless progress towards the fulfilment of what Amilcar Cabral spoke about.

In about 4 months, we will usher into office the 7th administration which will take forward the work of building the Eastern Cape we want. Biofuels, Cannabis, Ocean Economy, Bhisho Precinct, Bulembu Airport for Cargo, and Liquified Natural Gas are the main programmes that the 7th administration will pursue with vigour to unlock more economic benefits for our people and our province.

In the remaining period of this term, government will increase the tempo in implementing all the planned programs and projects aimed at growing the economy and improving service delivery in our province.

Conclusion

As this is the last State of the Province Address for the sixth administration, let me pay gratitude to the people of the Eastern Cape for the honour they gave us to serve. **Silukhulele uxanduva ebenisinike lona kule minyaka mihlanu. Iphondo lethu alibuyanga umva, kwaye alimanga ndawonye. Ngaphandle kwamathandabuzo silise phambili kunendawo elalikuyo ngo1994.**

We look forward to achieving more great things together. I urge all eligible voters in our province to take part in the 2024 elections to be held on 29 May to defend our democracy and advance a better life for all. Even when temperatures heat up during the election period, I call upon the citizens of our province to safeguard and protect existing infrastructure because we will need it when the elections are over. Let us reject violence, and economic sabotage in favour of socio-economic progress.

We appreciate former Premiers for their contributions to the development of our province in the 30 years of our freedom and democracy. A word of gratitude goes to you Honourable Speaker and Members of the Legislature for the cooperation and decorum displayed in this house in the five years of serving our people. Sadly, we lost some members of this house who were with us at the beginning of this term. Their memory lives on in our hearts.

We wish Honourable Bobby Stevenson, the longest-serving MPL, all the best as he enters into his retirement.

We are grateful to our social partners in business, traditional leadership, religious sector, labour, and civil society for making invaluable contributions to our journey of building the Eastern Cape we all want. **Nangamso mawethu!**

To the Members of the Executive Council, past and present with whom I served during this term, we fought a good fight colleagues. Be proud of your contributions.

To the workers of our province in farms, construction sites, factories, and shops, the cashiers, petrol attendants, drivers, and security guards who go to work every day to keep our economy ticking, we salute all of you for your hard work and resilience in the past 5 years.

To the Director General, Heads of Departments, CEOs of Public Entities, and public servants in all spheres of government in the Eastern Cape: **oomabhalana, ootitshala, amanesi, amapolisa, amajoni, enkosi kakhulu ngegalelo lenu ekwakheni iPhondo le Mpuma Kapa esilifunayo.**

Somlomo, Malungu ale Ndlu, nabantu bephondo esibaxabise kakhulu, Rome was not built in one day.

Masikhumbuleni kaloku ukuba xa kusakhiwa naphaya emakhaya zibakhona iingxaki abakhi abahlangabezana nazo. Ngoko ke ndicela singadinwa kukwakha iPhondo leMpuma Kapa esilifunayo. Iziphumo zolwakhiwo aziphumi ngosuku olunye. Nobuhle bazo abubonakali ngosuku olunye. Masisebenzeni ngomanyano nangokuzimisela kukufuphi ngaphambili.

Kuba ke amandla, nobungcwalisa ingebobam, ibobukaThixo umdali wezinto zonke, ndivumeleni ndehle ngelithi:

Nkosi Sikelela iPhondo lethu leMpuma Kapa.

Uve nemithandazo yethu singabantu beli Phondo.

See you soon,

Thank you very much.







Eastern Cape Office of the Premier
Premier Lubabalo Oscar Mabuyane



Eastern Cape Provincial Government



Eastern Cape Provincial Government



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