

**ADDRESS OF THE PREMIER OF MPUMALANGA, THABANG MAKWETLA TO  
THE OPENING OF THE FOURTH SITTING OF THE THIRD DEMOCRATIC  
LEGISLATURE**

Nelspruit 23 February 2007

Madame Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Mpumalanga Legislature,  
First Lady, Mrs Zanele Mbeki  
Chairperson of the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders,  
Members of the Executive Council,  
Honourable Members of the Mpumalanga Legislature and Members of Parliament,  
Secretary General of the ANC, Cde Kgalema Motlanthe,  
The Public Protector Advocate Lawrence Mushwana,  
Honourable National Ministers and Deputy Ministers,  
Speakers and Deputy Speakers from sister provinces,  
Our revered traditional leaders, Amakhosi/Magoshi,  
The Provincial Commissioner of Police Mr Afrika Khumalo,  
The Auditor General Mr B Madliwa,  
Our Honourable Mayors and Leaders of SALGA,  
The Director General of the Province and Heads of Departments,  
CEO's of our Parastatals,  
All our dignitaries,  
Our distinguished guests,  
Residents of our Province Mpumalanga throughout all our towns and far-flung  
villages and hamlets,  
Comrades and Friends, Compatriots,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

In his book, “The Monk who sold his Ferrari”, the internationally acclaimed writer and speaker on personal development and life improvement, Robin Sharma, says,

“Remember you will not find true joy in sleeping, in relaxing or in spending your time like an idler. The secret of success is constancy of purpose. The happiness you are searching for comes through reflecting on the worthy aims you are dedicated to achieving, and then taking action daily to advance them. This is a direct application of the timeless philosophy that prescribes that those things that are most important should never be sacrificed to those things that are least important, i.e. the power of setting clearly defined, purposeful goals and, most importantly, of having the character power to act on them.”

Allow me, with all humility Madam Speaker, to dedicate this address to my two children, Karabo and Marang, and all the thousands of the not-so-perfect kids from the not-so-perfect families, who know what it is to grow up unceremoniously with pain of deprivation of one kind or the other in their nascent lives, because they, among others, give meaning to the work we are here to report about and the programmes we have crafted for the period ahead, as we seek to turn this country into a better land for them to live in.

I am making these remarks, Madam Speaker, to respectfully differ with the cynicism of one of our eminent scribes who a week ago, in the weekend papers, said the State of the Nation Address in Parliament was boring. Indeed, Madam Speaker, it would be surprising if he is the only one who holds such a view, however what we all know to be the truth is that the overwhelming majority in this country who are not fortunate to enjoy the comforts of middle-class life such as our discerning scribe, among whom are women and children, the youth, the disabled and the aged, cannot, and are not, bored by these interventions and programmes. Their hope for salvation from their wretched lives, lies with this government’s ever-present contemplation of the challenging issues surrounding their existence.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, timeless wisdom tells us that the past explains the present and the present determines the future. The essence of this colourful gathering lies in the story of our past, and it was shaped by our past. It is a negation of segregation and separate development, totalitarianism, lack of democracy, lack of accountability, the disregard and suppression of popular participation.

As patriots we have therefore descended on Nelspruit, not to revel in just another annual pastime, but we are here because we don't take our freedom and democracy for granted, lest we forget. May I therefore steal this moment to say thank you for coming.

Honourable Members, on this occasion last year we said residents of this province had reason to have hope that visible progress in changing their lives for the better will be made.

It gives me great pleasure indeed to present to this august assembly a genuine progress report. We are upbeat today because the year 2006 witnessed some of the most inspirational achievements yet, as we go past the half-way mark of our provincial government of the April 2004 elections.

The firmness of these advances in our endeavour to create work in order to fight poverty, and the acceleration of service delivery, gives us confidence that the province will indeed steam ahead to the watershed year of 2009, buoyed up by these hard-won advances.

Honourable Members, the message our administration seeks to communicate to this House and the province at large is that we have found our range in grappling with the task of accelerating the realisation of a better life for all citizens in this province. This reality is not only borne by the significant achievements attained across all sectors of our work, but most importantly by the understanding of the wherewithal required for the work still to be done.

This occasion last year took place against the back-drop of advanced preparations for the local government elections and restlessness in some communities, owing to the pitched contestation among contending parties as they tested the limits of our democracy. It gives me pleasure to report that in spite of the many challenges we shall continue to grapple with, local government is one of the areas where our province has posted courageous achievements as attested by the buzz our municipalities generated at the December National Vuna Awards of Excellence in Local Government, taking home the first prize for the best Project Consolidate municipality and the best district municipality, for the second time in a row, thanks to the maturity and dedication of the majority of colleagues who are deployed in our local government.

What is instructive about this victory is not the two trophies Mpumalanga took home, but the obscure fact that out of twenty-two (22) municipalities identified nationally for quick deliverables in Project Consolidate, eleven (11) of them are in Mpumalanga. What was not sufficiently exposed is the consideration that one of the overriding dimensions of the criteria used, was the availability in these municipalities of good cogent plans in place for the roll-out of these sponsored projects, which says something about what is happening in the majority of our municipalities. To us the challenge therefore, is to strengthen and take to a higher level the coordination of support to these municipalities by the provincial government in the endeavour to realise the Millennium Development Goals. Needless to say, the challenge government, at all levels, must contend with in this regard, is information management.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, the province's collective sigh of relief was palpable upon the release of the matric results in December, less than two months ago. It had to be, because the goal of achieving a satisfactory pass-rate of matriculants in our province has eluded us for the last twelve years. We all have shared the frustration of consigning thousands of young people every year to the educational wilderness because of shattered dreams, in a region historically known for its high illiteracy levels. We must all congratulate the

class of 2006, the education department leadership, our educators and the parents for eventually putting this one in the bag for us. By being the most improved province by 6,7%, our province is now only 1% below the national average, at 65,3%. We all shared the ceaseless pain of watching our under-performance in education undermine our other efforts at eradicating poverty in many struggling families through our inability to facilitate successful access to education by those who need it most in order to be liberated.

To defend and ratchet up this gain is going to involve perpetual hard work. We must all rally around the education sector inspired by the break-through they have clinched, through hard work.

Madam Speaker, only those among us with an insufficient comprehension of the legacy and lesson of the struggle we have waged, can make the mistake to profess that change will not come, that the landscape of our country will not alter as visualised in Vision 2014.

The most daunting, singularly overwhelming delivery programme we tested our capacity against, and came out seriously bruised, but a lot wiser, is the eradication of the 'bucket-system' in the province. Two and a half years later, since April 2004, after a long-drawn battle I can, from the platform of this august body, indeed report that the Mpumalanga Province has eradicated the bucket-system, a year ahead of the nationally stipulated time-line of December 2007. Through this mammoth programme, 18,617 households benefited. Honourable Members, what is even more pleasing is the fact that the scope of this project in Mpumalanga went beyond the national parameters, the bucket-system has been removed in both the formal and informal settlements, appreciating the difficulty presented by informal settlements in conditions where the emergence of new ones is still a possibility, and the challenge in some cases to resettle communities on habitable land first, before their sanitation problem can be addressed. In such instances, such as in Delmas where land for new township establishment had to be found, we did not retreat – instead we went the whole hog. It is, indeed, an advance to be heartily celebrated.

Madam Speaker, when an over-enthusiastic hasty male lion isolates a buffalo-bull for a showdown, and in the process acts recklessly in anticipation of its glorious conquest, it will invariably take few knocks each time it forgets that it must never find itself in front of the buffalo-bull. Even if at the end, the episode ends with the buffalo-bull's neck broken and its huge carcass shining lifelessly under the sun, the lion may temporarily lie under the shade without much energy and appetite for its glorious kill, and nurse its sore muscles from punishment incurred during the un-calculating and reckless moments of the attack.

In the realm of media logic, we are told, the fascination in this spectacle is unlikely to be over the lion's power and glorious kill, but from the fact that the lion appears to be licking its wounds, so to speak.

Madam Speaker, the bucket-system eradication programme taught us many valuable lessons which must stand us in good stead in tackling the many similar challenges ahead. We now know the critical importance of information management, impeccable planning, dedicated project management, coordination of different spheres of government in executing a common programme, community participation and political mobilisation, and appreciate the need to manage fraud and the lie factor when tackling projects of this magnitude.

Madam Speaker, from this platform last year, we hinted that the province was about to receive the History and Heritage Research Report about our province, conducted over a period of a year under the able leadership of Professor Peter Delius in collaboration with the National Heritage Council. Today's occasion coincides with the publishing of a fascinating book on the History and Heritage of Mpumalanga by the University of Kwazulu-Natal Press, as part of the projects we undertook, to take this work forward. On behalf of our government we wish to thank all those who made this dream come true, for the opportunities this work has opened to our province.

This new site of our government work has already acquired passionate and enthusiastic companions and partners as evidenced by the letter I received from a certain Dr Cyril Hromnik, who writes and says:

“I wish to express my appreciation for the work which you and your staff have done with regard to the just finished symposium on ‘Stonewalling in Mpumalanga’, held in Middelburg on January 21-22, 2007. The symposium was very skilfully chaired by Prof Delius, assisted by Mrs Mani Molefe and Lebona Mosia.... The social ambience and the concomitant refreshments were perfect...”

“The symposium marked a watershed in the historiography and archaeology not only of Mpumalanga, but of South Africa in general as well.”

“The status ante-watershed was presented by a long since retired member of the orthodox school of African archaeology Prof Tim Maggs, who saw nothing wrong with the concept of the so-called ‘Central Bantu Cattle Culture’, which sees the very beginning of the Black African Culture and history in the cattle kraal, where food production and consumption, coupled with human reproduction and the inevitable intertribal strife over the same, is the sole objective and purpose of that society. This concept, Prof Maggs credited to the there present (in the audience) Prof Thomas Huffman from the Witwatersrand University, who conceived and postulated it years ago, in the 1970s. This image of the early Africa (then called Ethiopia), is devoid of mathematics, of any cultivated science, of philosophy and above all, of any theologically based religion. In other words, it sees the given society as devoid of most, if not all, cultural and spiritual attributes that qualify the ancient and more recent advanced cultures everywhere else in the world. This misinformed theory placed the Black people of Africa in a category of its own, as if they were not related to the rest of the world’s humanity.”

“Not at all surprisingly, Prof Maggs’ lecture did not stimulate any discussion, leaving a clear impression that the watershed has been reached, and the paradigm of the ‘Central Bantu Cattle Culture’ is heading, together with its ageing practitioners, for an early retirement.”

After graphically relating how he personally came under siege from archeologists, anthropologists and linguists from various universities, and threats to shut down his research for being a caricature and misleading, he (Dr Hromnik) went further to say,

“The major success of the whole exercise was that despite a concerted attack against my findings in ancient Indo-African history, not a single voice from my friends and my foes alike... came in favour of the now, and I repeat, now obviously defunct ‘Central Bantu Cattle Culture’ and now buried ‘cattle kraal’ interpretation of the stone structures in Mpumalanga. Prof Maggs had the dubious honour of delivering the final epitaph to that misconceived, and to the image of Africa in general, extremely damaging bully-beef demagogy.”

“My only disappointment was that the Premier of Mpumalanga, the Hon Thabang SP Makwetla, was, because of his ‘other commitments’, not able to attend the sessions of this very successful symposium.”

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, this illuminating and stimulating gathering referred to here above signals that the debate has started. As a consequence of the heritage research project, this symposium attests to the assertion that this project is indeed an exciting voyage of self-discovery, a robust dialogue in which there are no holy cows. Over and above the lively debate about our identity which the project was expected to bring up, it is the enormous economic opportunity this work presents to us that we must take full advantage of and translate into reality. To this end, our strategic intent has been integrated into our priorities of the province already. For us the most critical challenge is how these initiatives prop up our fight against poverty.

Madam Speaker, if today, in spite of the daunting challenges ahead and work still to be done, we exude confidence, it is because over the last year interventions to accelerate capacity building in our administration, have received a major boost thanks to the knowledge and creative skills of the Director General Mr Khaya Ngema. Executive training programmes for our senior managers have been designed and conducted with the assistance from professional institutions, in response to the gaps identified in our skills audit. I wish to commend all our managers and facilitators involved in this training.

Despite slow progress in some of the areas of our work, we have made remarkable strides in the implementation of the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy priorities, especially in critical areas such as the provision of basic services such as water and sanitation, electricity, local government delivery and housing.

Central to the effective implementation of the PGDS is achieving greater alignment and integration in the planning and implementation of government programmes across the three spheres of government. Working closely with the Presidency, we have initiated work to pilot the implementation of NSDP, PGDS and Integrated Development Plans in Nkangala District. The process of enhancing the provincial Integrated Spatial Framework and the PGDS in line with the NSDP principles will be completed in May 2007.

It is an important accomplishment that all District municipalities have held their District LED summits, which will give impetus and strategic focus on high impact projects that are necessary to stimulate local development. The participation of government's social partners in these developmental endeavours makes it a lot easier to achieve the higher levels of local economic development through coordinated planning and implementation.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, in my earlier remarks I commented that we believe we have found our range in tackling the development challenges of our province, which will ever be so many for any administration to

tackle all of them at once. As a matter of fact, in politics, not all the public needs that administrations find when they come into office, get addressed by the time their innings end. The challenges governments must address are always overwhelming. This reality begs the question: how do we optimise the utilisation of time and resources at our disposal to realise the biggest impact on our development challenges within our Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) goals and priorities?

In evaluating our PGDS priorities in all sectors, the Executive Council took a view that major projects with calculated potential for macro-impact on the socio-economic development of the province be identified in order to leverage the acceleration of development in Mpumalanga. Five flagship projects were identified for special attention through dedicated project management capacity, the concentration of resources and leadership provision. These flagships are the two economic development corridors, namely the Maputo Development Corridor and the Moloto Development Corridor; the revitalisation of our tourism by sponsoring the restoration, preservation and packaging of our Heritage and the greening of Mpumalanga to become South Africa's green region through conservation management; the roll-out of water infrastructure to provide water for all in the province in a sustainable way; and the acceleration of management capacity building to attain efficiency and excellence in delivering the vision for a better life across our administration.

These “Big 5” development programmes of Mpumalanga we believe will, through our efforts, soar and enjoy the majestic reputation of the “Big 5” of our abundant wildlife have. These “Big 5” of Mpumalanga must be like development sunbeams of the African Sun in our province.

Most importantly, Madam Speaker, we believe that these flagships will provide our development partners, both in the private sector and other areas, a focal point of priority activities and outcomes to which they will be able to contribute their resources and expertise in order to advance the resolutions of the 2005 Growth and Development Summit.

Madam Speaker, once again national government has placed sharp focus on the war against poverty. It is for this reason that the imperative to reduce unemployment amongst the populace of our province is paramount,. While the province has stabilised the unemployment trends, the situation is still far from the ideal. However, government in the province has done commendable work to create job opportunities through the Expanded Public Works Programme as promised when we started in 2004. In our journey speech of that year we committed ourselves to create 100,000 new jobs through the EPWP programme over the five years to the year 2009. It is encouraging that by September last year we had already created over 46,000 new jobs through this programme, slightly below the 50% mark we should have reached. However, the latest national reports on the EPWP places Mpumalanga in the leading pack of provinces where the programme is unfolding well. In 43,206 of the above jobs, skills transfer was realised.

Madam Speaker, to fight poverty in our province, as previously reported, government turned to the land to ameliorate the plight of our rural communities. The 'Masibuyele emasimini' programme of support to subsistence farming has now reached 2,189 beneficiaries at a budget of R21m in this financial year, ending in March. R30m is budgeted for expansion of this programme in 2007/8.

In the agricultural sector, anchor projects have been identified in key commodities such as macadamia, sugarcane, essential oils and soya beans to seek a redress of inequalities of the past, and to maximize the growth potential offered by these commodities. These are high impact projects that will be rolled out in the 2007/08 financial year to contribute towards job creation and poverty alleviation. The comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) has budgeted R84m to provide support to these projects and others. Amongst us in the audience today is someone who made all of us proud - Mrs Linda Ngatshane who walked away with the best National Female Farmer Award for the Year 2006.

Honourable Members, the centrality of the war against poverty in the government's mission over the medium term, demands honest self-evaluation to avoid telling lies and claiming easy victories, as it were. When we set out on our journey in April 2004 to create work in order to fight poverty, we foregrounded economic development planning as the nucleus of our administration's plans. We all agree that we could have done better and some of the hindrances were within our control to manage. We allowed subjective weaknesses to be our enemy. We have been falling behind on a few goals in the economic sector, including small and medium enterprise support programmes, economic sector strategy development, trade and investment promotion and monitoring, broad-based black economic empowerment, and cultivating regional economic linkages.

Madame Speaker, all the above challenges speak to the endeavour to create opportunities for jobs, which we have not paid sufficient attention to. Even as we lament the opportunities lost, we should exercise caution not to suggest that these are easy challenges and our capacity in the economic sector is equal to the task at hand. In this regard, Cabinet considers seriously the role our parastatals play. Our expectations on MEGA are high, and we hope that its management and leadership share with us this sense of urgency. One of our urgent challenges is to improve accountability and control of parastatals by their parent departments.

The Department of Economic Development and Planning, together with its parastatals, will go back to the master-plan of the Maputo Development Corridor to detail the projects to be embarked upon in the different municipalities along this corridor. Similarly, the Department together with its parastatals, in collaboration with the Nkangala District Municipality, must commence work on the Moloto Economic Development Corridor feasibility studies.

Road infrastructure maintenance and expansion remains one of our economic challenges in the province. While we have done a lot of work on several roads

that were in a state of disrepair, we have however fallen behind with our work on major road infrastructure projects where massive job opportunities are suppose to be created.

Our timelines on the Moloto ASGI-SA rail corridor are a cause for concern. The challenge of coordinating numerous stakeholders on a project of that magnitude proved cumbersome and unwieldy. However, these institutional hiccups have now been cleared and we hope the project will pick up its pace as planned.

The 5% growth rate experienced in our national economy has put pressure on our energy supply grid, which lies in our province. The repair work on the coal haulage road network that ferries coal from the mines to the power stations in Gert Sibande to the tune of R ½ billion has also suffered from inadequate management capacity to plan for it. This work will receive our top priority to inject these massive funds into the economy of that region through jobs and services rendered by communities while rehabilitating this infrastructure that is so critical to the country's energy industry.

In line with the national priority to expand the National Youth Service Corps and provide job opportunities and training for the youth, the province has set aside R11m to be used for the maintenance of health infrastructure, hospitals and clinics, as part of the EPWP. This will include young women and disabled persons.

We remain acutely aware that central to any effort to overcome poverty is the development of the human potential of our people through education and skills development. Drawing on the short-term interventions envisaged in ASGI-SA and those being coordinated under JIPSA, we need to step up the ongoing work to ensure access to affordable, quality and economically relevant education for all.

Madam Speaker, in order to support our initiatives in the crusade to deliver quality health care, we are continuing to strengthen our organisational capacity by filling vacant posts in the Department of Health and Social Services, strengthening management in the Department and in hospitals and developing and motivating the incumbent staff.

In our ongoing effort to improve our healthcare system, human capital development has received all the necessary attention. In order to improve the human resource capacity in the nursing fraternity, we will expand the training and employment of one hundred and fifty (150) nurses and nursing assistants at a cost of R17m in the financial year 2007/2008. We have awarded bursaries to 340 students. Seven hundred and sixty nurses have been trained on health related topics to render quality service to our patients. As part of the endeavour to enhance service delivery in the health sector, we shall in collaboration with NEHAWU study the Chris Baragwanath Hospital pilot project aimed at service delivery improvement.

As part of ensuring the efficient management of the healthcare system, the provincial administration will continue with the financial and human resources delegation to hospital CEO's and District Managers.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, the creation of a caring society stands at the centre of our development agenda. Support for families affected by HIV and AIDS, extreme poverty, disability, violence and abuse require close collaboration between communities, organs of civil society and government as a whole.

Some R40m has been allocated to support 175 Home Community Based Care centers that provide community-level support for vulnerable families, in the 2007/08 financial year.

We will also train and employ four hundred and forty (440) social and social auxiliary workers to add to the two hundred and fifty (250) currently in employment.

Madame Speaker, the Province will create an additional 80 sites for Early Childhood Development, which will provide 9,612 pre-school children with access to structured learning. R9,6m has been allocated to this programme in 2007/08.

The total number of schools declared **No Fee Schools** has reached nine hundred and eighty three (983). This makes all Quintiles 1 and 2 schools in the Province No Fee Schools. School principals are not allowed to charge school fees in these schools. This will impact on four hundred and four thousand four hundred and thirty one (404 431) learners who will receive free education.

To make freedom a reality for those who were denied opportunities by apartheid, we will enroll 26,000 participants in Adult Basic Education and Training courses in 2007/08 at a cost of R90m.

The introduction of ICT (Information and Communications Technology) in public schools received a huge impetus with the launch of the Provincial ICT Strategy. Forty five (45) schools were earmarked for the introduction of ICT and each school has been allocated a total of twenty five (25) computers for the introduction of an ICT laboratory per school. This has cost the Department an amount of R9,5m. The rollout to the next 150 schools will take place over the MTEF (Medium Term Expenditure Framework) period from 2007 to 2009.

Madame Speaker, a fundamental building block of society is the family, and families are severely challenged without access to decent, liveable housing. Such housing must not only provide protection against the elements but must also be located in areas that provide economic opportunities and in environments that are socially conducive to sustainable communities.

Over the 2006/07 financial year, Government has delivered 4 984 housing units and transferred 449 housing units. These figures graphically amplify our failures in the housing programme during this financial year. The numbers we were able to deliver this time around, is on average, only half of the work done in the previous years.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, whereas the deliberate decision to prioritise the completion of incomplete housing projects, was correct, it proved disastrous because it was not preceded by diligent planning. Central to the grossly low spending in the housing programme, is our inadequate planning capacity.

Furthermore, another challenge the housing programme has to contend with in the Province, is exactly the same for all infrastructure work – an acute shortage of project management capacity and professional technicians such as engineers and quantity surveyors.

Attempts to address this challenge have included the recruitment of twelve (12) Cuban engineers to prop up the technical expertise in the Department.

Water remains a key source of livelihoods and it is central to increased economic activities and investment. It is for this reason that '**water for all**' has been elevated to the status of a flagship project. This flagship project aims to accelerate the eradication of water backlogs in order to meet the 2010 target in a sustainable manner. This involves developing water services infrastructure for the 171,586 households that are currently without access to clean and safe water. Clearly, the attainment of this goal requires a very robust partnership between provincial and local government.

As we meet here today, an additional four hundred and seventy four thousand nine hundred and sixty one (474 961) households have access to free basic water. In the interim, since last year, our municipalities have been enjoined to acknowledge responsibility for water provisioning in areas where no

infrastructure exists. In collaboration with DWAF, the province is confident that we will make a break-through towards the realisation of the commitment to provide water for all.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, the health of any nation lies in the extent to which it is able to maintain a healthy and pristine environment, and use it in a sustainable way for the benefit and health of future generations. Mpumalanga is endowed with a pristine environment, and it is our responsibility to protect it from degradation.

As hinted in our previous address, the Executive Council and District Executive Mayors undertook a study tour to the Province of Alberta in Canada last year to benchmark, learn and share experiences on environmental management issues with their counterparts and draw lessons for implementation in the Mpumalanga context.

As explained earlier, one of the flagship projects involves the greening of Mpumalanga. The project's milestones will include:

- Pollution and waste management;
- Biodiversity planning and management;
- Spatial planning and development;
- Environmental awareness and planning

The Province will focus on the following projects to further the objectives of greening the Province of Mpumalanga:

- Clean-up campaigns will be rolled out in all municipalities to encourage communities to take care of their environment. Job opportunities will be created for local people to clean up areas where they live. This will be done within the framework of the expanded public works programme

- Tree and grass planting will mobilise communities and schools to plant trees and grass to contribute to the 'greening' of areas where communities live, and ensure that these areas are maintained in a good state at all times. A target of planting 100,000 trees has been set for the 2007/2008 financial year.
  
- The establishment of 3 central waste disposal sites and 1 provincial hazardous waste site will improve waste management practices in our municipalities

We will also conclude the compilation of the Environmental Report for the Nkangala District Municipality and the development of an Integrated Waste Management Plan for the Gert Sibande District Municipality. In Ehlanzeni District, the National Waste Management Strategy Implementation Project is being piloted in Mbombela Municipality. We believe that the pilots will assist us to move a step forward in environmental management in the Province. We must congratulate the Steve Tshwete Municipality for being the overall provincial winner of the Cleanest Town Competition (CTC). We should also note that the Province hosted the International Women and Environment Conference where 700 women from different countries came to Mpumalanga Province to reflect on the state of the Environment.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, Government has been able to accelerate the roll-out of Multipurpose Community Centres (MPCC's) through the renovation of unused infrastructure, due for completion by the end of March. From the beginning of the next financial year, 8 newly renovated MPCC's will be brought into service.

Madame Speaker, we are happy to report that the deployment of 300 Community Development Workers (CDW's) to municipal wards has contributed to improved service delivery to communities by bringing access to information on government services closer to communities. With the establishment of fully functional ward committees in the majority of wards in our local municipalities,

government has created possibilities for improved public participation on matters of local development and service delivery.

Madam Speaker, the coming year shall also see us expand our crime prevention strategies to municipalities as part of our plan to turn our localities and communities into safe environs for our 2010 visitors. The intention is to align municipal development strategies within a crime prevention framework that will mobilise all agencies and stakeholders within a common agenda to fight crime. This strategy will further be aided by the SAPS provincial policing strategy, the Afrika Concept, which aim is to decentralise resources to local stations in an effort to enhance the combating of crime.

Of utmost importance is the elaboration of the provincial 2010 Safety and Security Strategy as a matter of urgency.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, to accelerate capacity building in order for Government to deliver on all our critical programmes, we have decided to enhance the capacity of government officials through training, better performance management and improved selection, recruitment and retention practices.

Secondly, we must enhance the productivity of provincial and local government by developing organisational capacity through improved systems and values. To give effect to the training dimension, and in recognition of the need for continuous learning and innovation in government, the Mpumalanga Management Centre will be established in the next financial year. The Accelerated Capacity Building Project lies at the heart of the province's developmental agenda as all the evidence illustrates unequivocally that state capacity is a necessary condition to advance economic and social development. This work will receive additional attention as part of our "Big 5" development flagships.

Madame Speaker, we have promised zero tolerance to instances of undermining the integrity of government systems and public service delivery through fraud and corruption. We will continue to sustain our effort in proactively dealing with cases of fraud and corruption where this phenomenon rears its ugly head. We are happy to report that we have dealt decisively with cases of fraud and corruption where these have been discovered. In the 2007/2008 financial year, we will enhance our capabilities in forensic investigations, greater transparency and accountability for performance and computer auditing so that potential threats to the integrity of governance systems are discovered before they cause havoc to service delivery. To achieve this, we intend to establish three units in the Premier's Office, namely, Forensic Audit, Performance Audit, and Computer Audit.

Honourable Members, the operationalisation of the Mpumalanga Traditional Leadership and Governance Act, 2005 (Act no 5 of 2005) and the Mpumalanga Provincial and Local Houses of Traditional Leaders Act, 2005 (Act no.6 of 2005), has not proceeded as planned due to insufficient guidelines that must govern many of the processes involved. The irregular inputs from the national department on these issues have not assisted. We need closer collaboration between both provincial and national leaders of the House of Traditional Leaders, and the central participation of DPLG to rectify the situation.

Cabinet will soon receive a draft policy on resource allocation to the constituency of traditional leadership.

Madam Speaker, as we promised twelve months ago, in July last year we appointed a Deputy Director-General in the Office of the Premier to lead the 2010 process in Mpumalanga. A Master Plan that focuses on several pillars which are considered critical success factors for the hosting of the 2010 games, have been elaborated. It includes safety and security, health, disaster management and emergency medical services, economic development and tourism, stadium infrastructure, integrated infrastructure development, sports architecture and legacy projects.

In order to advance the province's social development agenda, R10m has been allocated to implement five community sport and recreation programmes in each District Municipality in 2007/08.

Mbombela was among the first South African host cities to turn the sod for the stadium. We are satisfied with progress in fast tracking work on stadium-related infrastructure such as ring roads connecting the stadium to main road infrastructure network.

It is essential that the Province enhances its disaster management and response capabilities in anticipation for 2010 and beyond. Construction work will commence in June this year, and the project will be completed in May 2009. R15m has been put aside in the 2007/2008 financial year for the first phase.

Linked to the establishment of the Disaster Management Centre is the implementation of the Health Emergency Medical Services Model that focuses on achieving shorter response times, better communication systems, vehicle replacement, introduction of aero-medical services and basic training course for ambulance assistants. This will significantly enhance our readiness to provide quality emergency health services that meet 2010 World Cup standards.

We will purchase 83 ambulances for R22m in preparations for 2010 and beyond.

It is essential that we achieve broad-based participation and access to the 2010 World Cup experience so that it fosters social cohesion. To this end, we will be establishing fan parks that will bring the games to where the people are, and provide for all entertainment and experience during the period of the World Cup. These parks will serve to bring the people of Mpumalanga together to be part of the global community watching and enjoying the World Cup experience.

We will endeavour to make 2010 a truly African experience by ensuring the equitable participation of our neighbours, Swaziland and Mozambique.

Additional impetus will be given to the creation of a “one-stop” 2010 Office, which will house all 2010 related government components at all levels. In the year ahead the 2010 Office will focus on consolidating and facilitating optimal use the Province’s relationship with North Rhine Westphalia, a province which had three venues during the FIFA World Cup 2006.

In conclusion Madame Speaker, Honourable Members, the report we have presented here this morning speaks about battles emphatically won and valour displayed by many public servants in this province. Equally this report also points to flanks dangerously bridged to warrant a re-organisation of our formations in order to advance. Once again we give this august house and the province at large, the assurance that we have what it takes to take our work to a higher level. We come from a glorious tradition of struggle and self-sacrifice, no prize can be too much for us to pay.

Allow me to evoke the characteristic clarity of purpose and total devotion of Winston Churchill when he said, and I quote:

“Sure I am that this day we are masters of our fate, that the task which has been set before us is not above our strength; that its pangs and toils are not beyond my endurance. As long as we have faith in our own cause and an unconquerable will to win, victory will not be denied us”

Many citizens and patriots in this government and its administration on a daily basis do things that make them unsung heroes and heroines, owing to their genuine commitment to enhancing service delivery and improving the lot of our people.

We shall not fail them!

I thank you.