
**STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS BY HONOURABLE. E.S. MAGASHULE
PREMIER OF THE FREE STATE PROVINCE**

27 FEBRUARY 2018

Honourable Speaker of the Free State Legislature

Honourable Members of the Legislature and Executive Council

Honourable Members of the National Assembly and the NCOP

Judge President and esteemed members of the Judiciary

Leaders of the African National Congress and the Alliance

The Veterans and Stalwarts of our struggle

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Modulasetulo wa Ntlo ya marena, Kgosisigadi Gaongalelwe Moroka le marena kaofela

The leadership of SALGA and the leadership of our municipalities

The Acting provincial Commissioner of the SAPS

All our special guests

Members of Civil and Faith Based Organizations

Leaders of our institutions of higher learning

Comrades, Compatriots and Friends

Viewers and listeners

“UNITY FOR COMMON PROSPERITY AGAINST POVERTY”

In a small village of Mvezo, Qunu, near Umtata, a baby boy was born in 1918, 100 years ago. He was named Rolihlahla Mandela. If he was still alive, he would be turning 100 years old this year. Despite being born into a royal family, Nelson Mandela sacrificed his entire life for the liberation of our people against Apartheid colonialism of a special type.

Being from a royal family, he would have either been awarded a plush position by the Apartheid regime, or given leadership authority in one of the traditional areas. But instead, he became a political prisoner for over twenty seven years, fighting for the noble cause of the struggles for the total liberation of our people.

The same year, the world again witnessed the birth of one of the most outstanding mothers of our national democratic revolution, Mama Albertina Sisulu. Born out of a poor family, Mama Sisulu was forced at an early age to go and seek for employment opportunities in order to look after her family.

In 1939, Mama Sisulu was accepted as a **Trainee Nurse**, at Johannesburg Central, a so called non-European Hospital. Whilst working there, she was exposed to ingrained racism through the adverse treatment of senior Black nurses by junior White nurses. In 1941, when her mother passed away, Albertina was denied the right to return to her village of Xolobe to pay her last respects.

She continued to occupy the forefront trenches of our struggle at the most difficult period of our revolution when many of our leaders were either in prison or in exile. It was for this reason that the United Democratic Front named her the mother of the nation.

Honorable Speaker, we take pride to welcome you all to this auspicious occasion of the state of the province address, during the important year of the centenary anniversary celebrations of the life and times of these two legendary leaders of the struggle of our people. We indeed take the opportunity of this rare historic moment, to dedicate our struggle to the many of our unsung heroes and heroines of our struggle.

As we continue with the long march of our struggle for the improvement of the living conditions of our people, a long march into the future of prosperity, we shall continue to include in the roll call, the names of the volunteers of our liberation such as Nelson Mandela, Albertina Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, Joe Slovo, Moses Kotane, Thabo Mofutsanyana, Fezile Dabi, ZR Mahabane, Albert Nzula, Caleb Motshabi, Thomas Maphikela, Kaizer Sebothelo and Dr. J.S Moroka.

We shall forever cherish their immeasurable contribution to the noble cause of our struggles for the freedom and dignity of our people. Together we shall walk the long path along their footprints to make the world a better place for humanity.

Honorable Speaker, we present the state of the province address two months after our national liberation movement, the African National Congress, held its historic 54th elective national conference. The conference was indeed a milestone achievement in the history of our glorious national liberation movement.

Of paramount importance amongst others, were the resolutions to appropriate land without compensation and provide fee - free education to the millions of the young people of our country from the poor and working class families. The historic decisions of the 54th conference will indeed bolster a new trajectory to accelerate the strategic objectives of building a non-racial, non-sexist, prosperous and a democratic society.

As the SONA informed by the January 8 Statement delivered by President Cyril Ramaphosa, our focus for the coming financial year will be on Jobs especially for youth, stimulating manufacturing, Investing in the development of township and rural enterprises, infrastructure, revitalization of Mining Towns, Small businesses, cooperatives, township enterprises, Land and Agriculture, Health and NHI, Education and dealing with Corruption.

Honourable Speaker, it is against this background that we present to the people of the Free State and our country, the achievements of our provincial government and also to outline plans for the next financial year.

1. SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

“The year of Unity of the people of South Africa”

Honorable Speaker, since the dawn of our democratic breakthrough, the ANC led government has made significant progress in addressing the challenges of poverty, disease and underdevelopment. However, despite the progress that we have made, we believe that we still have much more to do.

Since the year 2009, we have, through the Operation Hlasela service delivery model, embarked on vigorous programmes to reverse the legacy of Apartheid colonialism which persists in our society. Through this programme, we have indeed contributed significantly, in transforming the unjust foundations of the Apartheid socio economic superstructure.

Honourable speaker, the governing African National Congress has made education its top priority and the Free State provincial government will continue making resources available to ensure that our children receive quality education.

It remains our strong belief that **Education** must continue to be the first priority of government as it lays the foundation for the creation of a prosperous society. President Nelson Mandela was always an advocate for education.

President Mandela's immortal words that "**Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world**" continue to inspire us and we are certain that they will continue to inspire the generations of man to come.

Not only will we continue providing our children with quality education, but we are also going to empower the teachers with training so that they improve the execution of their duties. In the new financial year, at least 300 Pre-Grade R practitioners will study towards an NQF Level 4 over a three year period.

To date, about 100 Grade R practitioners are currently registered with the University of North West and their tuition started on the 3rd of February this year. In addition, 50 practitioners have been identified to study towards a Diploma in Grade R teaching to be funded by ETDP SETA.

The **Matric Pass Rate** has become a measure of educational performance in South Africa. In what is now becoming a norm, the performance of the Grade 12 good leavers popularly known as the matric class of 2017 again placed the Free State in the number one spot.

In 2009, when the current administration took over, our Grade 12 pass rate was at **Sixty Nine Point Four Percent (69.4%)**. In 2013, the Free State achieved the highest matric pass rate in the country at 87.4%, which was the highest in the history of post 1994

In 2016 and 2017, the Free State again achieved the highest matric pass rate in the country at 88.2% and 86% respectively.

*Motsamaisi wa dipuisano, ke kopa o ntumelle ke ananele le
ho theoletsa ditereketsa rona tsa Fezile Dabi le
Thabo Mofutsanyana, tse ileng tsa ithoma pele hofetaditereke tsa Afrika Borwa kaofela.
Re motlotlo hore setereke sa Fezile Dabi
se etelletse pele ditereke tsohle naheng ka 90.2%, mme se latelwa haufinyaneboemong
ba bobedi ke setereke sa Thabo Mofutsanyana ka 90.1%. Re a hlasela!*

The no-fee subsidies is currently benefitting more than 542 thousand learners from poor backgrounds.

About 87.2% of our schools have been declared no-fee schools

The number of learners receiving a government-funded school lunch per day increased from 438 thousand in 2009 to more than 573 thousand currently.

The number of hostels gradually increased to 12 in 2009 and 33 in 2016 accommodating 4 269 learners

More than 10 000 learners in the province are provided with learner transport.

Going forward, the focus will be on increasing the number of school hostels.

The number of children accessing Grade R increased from 43 286 in 2012 to 46 190 in 2017

In 2016, 649 public schools provided Grade R compared to 643 in 2014

By 2016, 88.4% of Grade 1 learners received formal Grade R. This has increased from 79.1 in 2014 to 88.4% in 2016

31 New state of the art schools (including 8 ASIDI Schools Replacement of Unacceptable Structures) were built between 2009 and 2017.

In the **2018/2019** financial year, the department of education will build **nine (9)** new schools throughout the province. This, Honourable speaker, is in addition to the **fourteen (14)** new schools started in previous financial years, **Seven (7)** of which are expected to be completed in the 2018/19 financial year.

Nine new schools to commence in 2018/2019

- New Special School in Trompsburg
- DR Sello Primary School in Viljoenskroon
- Vogelfontein Primary School in Bethlehem
- Morena Tshohisi Intermediary School in Harrismith
- Katlego Mpumelelo Primary School in Sasolburg
- Tweeling Combined School in Tweeling
- Tshehetso Primary School in Bothaville
- Tsebo Ulwazi Secondary School in Frankfort
- Parys Primary School

We expect the following new schools to be completed in the 2018/2019 financial year:

- Grassland Primary School in Bloemfontein
- Grassland Secondary School in Bloemfontein

- Bekezela Primary School in Sasolburg
- Mooifontein Primary School in Zastron
- Rehopotswe Primary School in Bethlehem
- Hani Park Primary School in Welkom
- Thembalihle Primary School in Vrede
- Tlholo Primary School in Botshabelo

As we promised in the previous State of the Province Address, the Smart Schools project has been launched and is running smoothly. To date, we have already piloted **Five (5)** Schools and we anticipate to complete the project on the 30th of March.

We also launched the **Quality of Learning and Teaching Campaign** last year. Through this campaign, we established **Quality Learning and Education Committees** in each town, with a purpose to enhance community engagement and involvement per town, circuit and school.

In our quest to improve Mathematics learning outcomes, the Department of Education has developed the **Madeira Project**, which saw **Four (4)** Mathematics teachers from Madeira, Portugal being assigned 10 Primary Schools in each District.

As we promised in the previous State of the Province Address, we remain committed to the implementation of a School of Skills in **Qelo Primary School** in Botshabelo. We have completed the first phase of renovations and we are currently busy with the second phase. Teachers have already been appointed and machinery and furniture will soon be procured.

As part of enhancing governance and community participation in our schools, we urge our parents to participate in the elections of School Governing Bodies (SGBs), which are expected to take place in all our schools from the 1st until the 31st of March this year.

As a clear demonstration of the Free State's commitment to education, our teachers have again raised our flag high at this year's National Teaching Awards.

I wish to congratulate the following teachers for their commendable performance at the Teaching Awards;

- Mr. Andrew Taylor from Brebner High School in Mangaung, for winning the **Lifetime Achievement Award**
- Ms. Ntsolo Maria Ramabodu from Nelson Mandela Primary School in Fezile Dabi District, who won the **Excellence in Grade R Teaching Award**
- Mr. Sandile Mdlalose, from Thiboloha Special School in Thabo Mofutsanyane District, who won the **Excellence in Special Needs Award**
- Ms. Jolinda Daniel from Parys High School in Fezile Dabi District, who won the **Excellence in Secondary School Teaching**
- Mr. Johan Volstedt, former Headmaster of Grey College High School in Mangaung, who came **Third** in the **Kader Asmal Excellence category and,**
- Mr. Gerhard Malan from Aurora Primary School in Welkom, who came **Third** in the **Technology Enhanced Teaching and Learning Category**

On a sad note Honourable Speaker, we learned with heavy hearts of the untimely and brutal killing of **Sarah Motsitsi**, from **Reseamohetse Public School in Theunnisen**. Ms. Motsitsi was the provincial and national winner of the Excellence Technology Enhanced Teaching and Learning awards last year.

Violent crime has once more robbed us of a young promising life. Allow me Honourable Speaker to take this moment, on behalf of the Free State provincial government, to send our deepest condolences to the Motsitsi family. May her soul rest in peace.

Since 2009, the Free State Provincial Government has contributed towards increasing access to higher education, especially for the poor and the working class.

In addition to assisting needy and deserving students to apply for and study through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, we have over the years also been able to assist students who come from households with missing gap parents.

More black students than ever before are now enrolled in higher education institutions across the country, indicating the changing face of higher education institutions

In 2009, there were only 129 bursaries funded by the provincial government

The number of bursaries awarded to students increased from only 129 in 2009 to more than 8000 currently

Investment on bursaries increased from only R 5.4 million in 2009 to more than R 400 million in 2015 and over R 330 million currently

More than 500 White students across the Province also benefited from the bursary scheme

A clear policy will be developed to guide us to evaluate our ability to support students who come from households mentioned above. We will use the available resources to try and enhance our contribution towards the fee-free higher education agenda of the ANC and its government.

We express gratitude to President Jacob Zuma for the pronouncement on fee free higher education for the poor and working class. We congratulate President Ramaphosa for implementing on this resolve.

As part of a programme of skills revolution, and in line with our desire to benefit from international solidarity, we have sent a number of students to international universities and vocational colleges.

So far, we have over **One Thousand Two Hundred (1 200)** students studying at various institutions across the world. The Free State Provincial Government is supporting students studying in various fields, including Medicine, Engineering, Nuclear Science and Agro-Processing.

Country	Fields of study	No. of students
Russia	Medicine; Agriculture, Veterinary Science; Nuclear Science	235
Madeira, Portugal	IT; Engineering; Photography and Tourism	209
India	Pharmacy	20
Germany	Masters in Mining and Water Reticulation	15
Belarus	Agriculture; IT	36
Turkey	Medicine; Engineering; Pharmacy; Mechatronics; Robotics	171
Cuba	Medicine	189
China	Medicine; Engineering; Agriculture; PhD in Environmental Science	279
Brazil	Vocational, Technical and Artisan Training	97
Bulgaria	Agriculture – Six of these Students are doing Masters while Ten are doing are Undergraduate - Plant, Pests and Diseases	16
Washington DC, USA	Master's in Business Administration	4
Total international students		1 271

In line with the programme for international students which started in 2014, Turkey and China were the 1st countries where we sent our students.

It is our belief that these students, once they complete their studies, will be able to contribute immensely to Free State and South Africa's social and economic development.

Honourable Speaker, we remain resolute in our endeavor to equip our young people with the necessary skills. In the current financial year (2017/2018), **One Thousand One Hundred and Seventy Three (1 173)** unemployed youth benefitted from our skills development programmes. I am also pleased to report that we currently have **Four Hundred and Forty Eight (448)** young people enrolled in apprenticeship and learnership programmes.

We further commit to assisting hundreds more of our young people in the next financial year by placing them in different programmes which will prepare them for life in the work place. In the 2018/2019 financial year, **Five Hundred (500)** unemployed graduates will be placed in **Graduate Internship Programmes**, and another **Seven Hundred (700)** TVET students will be placed in **Work Integrated Learning Programmes**. *Re a hlasela!*

Between June and July this year, **One Hundred and Seventeen (117)** of the **One Hundred and Eighty Nine (189)** students currently studying medicine in Cuba will be returning to our country to complete the last **18** months of their studies. All these students will be distributed amongst the following hospitals as training sites.

- Boitumelo Hospital
- Bongani Hospital,
- Albert Nzula Hospital
- Manapo Hospital and
- Dihlabeng Hospital.

The remaining **68** students will be coming back home in the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 financial years. Once qualified the students will be deployed to clinics in the rural and farming areas across the province.

A further total number of **97** students will be going to Brazil during March this year to do vocational training.

In the 2017 State of the Province Address, we announced that an Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) hub, would be established in Maccauvlei, near Sasolburg. In this regard, I am happy to announce that the skills academy of the Free State in Maccauvlei has been established and will open its doors to learners, students and ICT practitioners this year.

The skills academy will deliver cutting edge quality ICT skills and accredited training programs. These specialized skills are necessary to drive the Free State growth and development strategy and position the province as a strategic national and international competitor in the sector.

The Skills academy will have curriculum of countries such as India, China, Rwanda, Brazil and in partnership with Microsoft and Vodacom.

Honourable Speaker, the NDP Vision 2030 enjoins us to increase life expectancy to at least 70 years for both males and females, the generation of under 20's to be largely free of HIV. Infant mortality rate to be less than 20 deaths per 1000 births. And under five mortality rates to be less than 30 per 1000 births. We also need to ensure that we progressively improve tuberculosis prevention and cure. All this must be done by 2030.

During his incarceration for nearly three decades, President Mandela was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Later on in his life, he was also diagnosed with TB. Madiba was also affected when a family member succumbed to HIV/AIDS.

However, in true Madiba fashion, he did not wallow in self-pity, but turned that experience into a positive and thus became a health activist.

Mama Albertina Sisulu, a trained nurse, was a human rights activist whose involvement in the struggle was mainly inspired by her experiences in the health profession.

We have improved TB screening from 70 % to 92%. In 2016, our TB Screening Rate was at 65%. The TB cure rate has improved to 76.6%.

In our efforts to combat HIV and AIDS, as well as TB. As the Chairperson of PCA, I have adopted the 90-90-90 strategy as well as the National Strategic Plan 2017 – 2025 on TB eradication.

In this regard, I am pleased to announce that the province has made big strides by having 82% of people living with HIV to know their status, 79% of people who know their HIV status are now on treatment and 90% of people on ARV are virologically suppressed.

Empirical evidence suggests that on the whole, the Health Status of Free State Citizens, measured through key health indicators, continues to improve.

The Total Life Expectancy (LE) at birth has increased from 46.6 in 2012 55.3 years in 2016.

Re A Hlasela!!!

In our quest to improve access to quality health care, a total of 37 specialists will be recruited from India to resume duty from 1st of May 2018 and the identified specialties will be in **Obstetrics and Gynecology, Anesthesiology, Surgery, Pediatrics and Family Medicine** to deal with the back log of operations particularly in orthopedics.

In the recent State of the Nation Address, President Ramaphosa said: “We will also need to confront lifestyles diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, cancers and cardiovascular diseases. In the next three months we will launch a huge cancer campaign similar to the HIV counselling and testing campaign”.

We commit to embark on massive campaigns in contributing to these pronouncements made by the President.

In the state of the province address last year, we announced that we would improve our existing healthcare facilities and also build new ones.

I am glad to report that we built and made improvements to the following facilities;

- New Vivian Mangwane clinic, Parys
- Cornelia clinic
- Pelonomi hospital – ICU
- Pelonomi Waste Management
- Ramolotsi Clinic, Viljoenskroon
- Albert Nzula Hospital in Xhariep
- Sinoritha Nhlabathi Hospital in Ladybrand
- Dr. Che Guevara Community Health Centre in Amelia, Sasolburg

Two 24 hour clinics have been opened thus far and we will open another one in Metsimaholo and Xhariep.

The Free State Province has taken note on mental health issues and to this end we will be looking at constructing the new Free State Psychiatric hospital in Bloemfontein and the New MDR/XDR TB unit in Mantsopa as well as Kopano MDR unit in Welkom starting from the new financial year.

We are happy that our work in piloting **National Health Insurance** in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District contributed to the progress that has been achieved so far in

this area. We are also pleased that the President announced that the National Health Insurance bill will be sent to parliament in the next few weeks.

Re a hlasela... siyaqhuba!

Honourable Speaker, throughout her life, Mama Albertina Sisulu has been committed to the struggle for human and social development. “Mother of the Nation”, as she was fondly known, was a true champion of social development.

We wish to pay homage to her selfless humanitarian and community work. Through the Albertina Sisulu Foundation, Mama Sisulu spent more than 50 years of her life doing practical work to improve the lives of children and the elderly.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) remains our priority which seeks to improve the provision of universal access of Early Childhood Development to children aged **0-5 years**.

We will consider to convert some of our old buildings into centers for substance and drug abuse.

We are currently subsidizing **Fifty Thousand Four Hundred and Eighty (50 480)** children in **One Thousand and Eighteen (1 018)** ECD Centers across the province. This number will be increased to 53 241 children in 2018/19.

We will continue to implement our noble **Active Ageing Programme for older persons** in partnership with other stakeholders to ensure long and healthy lifestyles. **Seven Hundred and Twenty Eight (728)** Community Based Care and Support Services are currently funded to implement Active Ageing Programmes in various towns in the province.

During the 2018/19 financial year, the Free State will host the National Active Ageing Programme in Mangaung Metro Municipality. Re a Hlasela!

The problem of substance abuse has escalated and needs a multipronged intervention in order to reduce the health, social and economic problems and risks associated with substance abuse.

We will officially open the **Dr. Beyers Naude Substance Dependency Halfway House** in March this year in Clarens. The Centre will provide care and rehabilitation, life skills and support for re-integration of service users to their families and communities.

The centre will accommodate up to **40** adult service users for the duration ranging from **3 weeks to 6 months** based on need.

An increasing number of girls miss school days as a result of lack of sanitary ware and this places them at a disadvantage in terms of education, employment, health and social activities.

We reported in the 2017 State of the Province Address that we had initiated a project for production and distribution of Sanitary Towels. The project, which will create employment opportunities to 15 youth at its initial phase, will be officially launched in March 2018, Phuthaditjhaba in Thabo Mofutsanyana district.

SASSA continues to combat poverty by expanding access to social grants on a daily basis through outreach programmes and taking applications of all eligible people. A total number of 998 846 needy people in Free State are benefiting from social grants paid a total of over R730 million per month, amounting to over R8 billion per year. The number of people benefiting constitutes 36% of the Free State population.

Honourable Speaker, as we continue on our herculean journey of building a non – racial, non – sexist and democratic South Africa, we are reminded of what Madiba told us in May 2000 when he said: “Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does.

It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than government in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all kinds of discrimination.”

As we announced in the 2017 State of the Province Address, we are proud to report that we have unveiled the statues of two revolutionary freedom fighters, President Oliver Reginald Tambo and El Commandant Fidel Castro. The unveiling of these statues marked an important epochal moment in the history of our province. The Fidel Castro statue is the only one in the world.

We unveiled these statues not only to honour the legacies left by these stalwarts of our revolution, but also as a way to ensure that our history is never forgotten. As the current generation, we have a fulfilling duty to make sure that those who come after us appreciate our history, so that they can make sure that the mistakes of our past are never repeated.

The statues of Albertinah Sisulu and Fezile Dabi will be erected in Welkom and Parys.

In our efforts to honour the legacy of Mama Winnie Mandela, we will continue to work with the different stakeholders to ensure that the establishment of the Winnie Mandela Museum in Brandfort is completed.

The park for the Heroes Park in Thaba Nchu has been identified. The statues of African liberation leaders will be erected.

We are happy to announce that, following our request to the national cabinet, the Wesleyan Church, where the ANC was founded in 1912, has been formally declared a National Heritage Site by the South African Heritage Resources Agency. We will soon announce the date of the official launch of this heritage site.

As we celebrate Madiba's centenary, we will be embarking on a rigorous programme on the exhibition of the life and times of Madiba across the province. We will build on the positive experience of the celebrations of the Centenary of President O.R Tambo and the centenary of the ANC.

Some of the magnificent sport infrastructure projects completed by the current administration include:

- Dr. Rantlai Molemela stadium in Mangaung
- Siphso Mutsi Indoor Sport Centre in Kutlwanong, Odendaalsrus
- Kaizer Sebothelo Stadium
- Fezile Dabi Stadium in Tumahole
- Siphso Mutsi Stadium in Kutlwanong, Odendaalsrus

Other stadiums are earmarked to be built in the coming financial years in Thabong, Kutlwanong, Maokeng, Bohlokong.

Seven Libraries were built during the current administration in:

Orangeville, Verkeerdevlei, Memel, Hobhouse, Arlington , Edenville and Petrusburg.

We'll continue to build more libraries and ensure that unemployed graduates will be employed as librarians. We are going to open four state of the art libraries this month.

The National Department of Arts and Culture has appointed a contractor and the work will start in April 2018. It is anticipated that the Winnie Mandela Museum will be completed in February 2019.

Honourable Speaker, speaking at the *Youth* Forum on HIV/AIDS in September 2003, President Mandela emphasized the important role that young people played in the liberation of our country and the role that they still need to play moving forward. Madiba said, and I quote; "Meeting and speaking with the youth, are

always encounters that inspire and uplift me, reaffirming my faith in the capacity of humankind to build a better future”.

In the context of our young democracy, young people must become champions of our commitment to human rights, social development and be capacitated to fulfil this role. At the same time, youth development should pursue the objectives of a developmental state characterized by strong collaboration between government, civil society, the private sector, communities, families and individuals.

In our quest to confront the Fourth Industrial Revolution, technology becomes an important tool in the advancement of development for the youth in particular and society in general. We will have the first ever Free State **Youth Connekt Summit** in partnership with other countries on the continent as well as BRICS block of countries in September as it presents an opportunity to bring a meaningful and educational experience to the youth of the Free State and to advance the fourth industrial revolution. We will therefore support 500 000 learners, youth and adults with ICT Skills over the next three years.

While the youth of 1976 fought for freedom and the creation of a democratic state, today’s youth activism must directed towards successfully tackling the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

June Month will be commemorated by celebrating the life of the **Father of the Nation: President Nelson Mandela**, through various programmes including the **Nelson Mandela Tour** which will take young people from all over the Province on a journey of the life of this luminary.

To assist young graduates who have completed qualifications in various local and international universities, **Youth Unemployment Forums** will be established in all Free State towns. These Youth Unemployment Forums shall operate through offices of the Youth Development Officers at local government level, and they will assist in making sure employment opportunities are taken to young people.

We care for our young people, and as young people of the Free State often say, “Generally we are fine” ours is to ensure that indeed they are fine.

Honourable Speaker, our vision of human settlement is development beyond the provision of housing, but extends towards the broader goal of sustainable human settlements, more efficient cities and towns, and spatial restructuring.

The need to address housing challenges was so important to our government that even President Nelson Mandela, in his opening address to Parliament on 18 August 1994, had this to say; “The biggest single programme to be funded by the RDP projects allocation is the rehabilitation and extension of municipal services and infrastructure in urban and rural areas. Combined with the outstanding initiatives with regard to the housing programme, this project will play an important role in facilitating the development of legitimate local government structures”.

As part of our effort to implement integrated human settlements, and as part of Operation Hlasela Service Delivery Model, we have delivered various housing opportunities to our people.

From April 2009 to date, we have delivered more than **Eighty Eight Thousand Six Hundred and Fifty Six (88 656)** housing opportunities to our people in the province. **Re a Hlasela!**

The Community Residential Units project of Silver City and Dark City will yield government subsidized rental units for qualifying middle income earners when completed. The top site which will yield 266 units of varying sizes, has a contractor on site and is targeted for completion in June 2018.

The bottom site will yield 526 units on completion. The new contractor is due on site at the beginning of April 2018 and the project’s completion date is set at end March 2019.

The Hillside View mixed housing development will create Six Thousand (6 000) different typologies that includes BNG, Bonded Houses, Military veteran houses, social housing, town houses and Student Accommodation.

The Caleb Motshabi Housing Development Project is part of our Catalytic Projects and received priority attention in our quest to address informal settlements. Currently we are in the process of installing services for sewer and water in **Seven Thousand and Five Hundred (7 500)** sites where our people used to live without these services.

Installing of services in K10 Odendaalsrus Phokeng in Welkom, Matlharanthleng, Bothaville which will be followed by building of houses.

In the coming financial, year we will develop **Fifteen Thousand Three Hundred and Five (15 305)** sites around the various towns of the province. This is a demonstration of our commitment to deliver sustainable and integrated human settlements for our people.

We want to commit to our people that we will never abandon the mandate to address apartheid spatial planning by bringing our people closer to towns and cities.

We will continue to provide those in need and deserving with housing. We have released title deeds registered in municipalities of Moqhaka, Metsimaholo, Nketoana and Dihlabeng to beneficiaries. This is an ongoing process that seeks to issue title deeds on completion of houses in order to curb and finally address the backlog in this regard.

The Department of Human Settlements and Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality are facilitating transfer of houses formerly owned by the North West Development Corporation in Thaba Nchu Unit 1 into the names of beneficiaries. We have currently registered **One Hundred and Fifty (150)** title deeds to qualifying beneficiaries.

This process restores security of tenure to these beneficiaries and entrenches their faith in this democracy.

2. ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

“The Year of Jobs”

Honourable Speaker, as we continue to march on with the implementation of a Radical Economic Transformation Agenda, we are reminded of the wise words of Madiba when he said; **“Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice. Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings...”**

The Free State Province has recorded significant improvements in economic indicators from the province.

The **unemployment rate** improved from 34.4% in quarter three of 2016 to 31.8% in quarter three 2017 which signifies a decline in the unemployment rate of 2.6% year on year.

International Trade and Investment Promotion

Creating an environment that supports trade and attracts investments are two key tools in promoting inclusive and sustainable growth. Through them, jobs are created, providing more stable sources of income and giving people more access to health, education and opportunities to create a better life for themselves and their families.

The Free State Province was **traditionally a net import province**, which imported more goods than it exported. The situation has since changed and **the Free State is recorded as a net Export province.**

We continue to enjoy international co-operation with more than 35 countries, both on the African continent and across other continents. In line with these relations, the province was able to attract much needed trade and investment.

These partnerships have assisted us not only in education, but also in international trade relations, which provided an ample platform for the Free State provincial government, to participate in the global market.

Our **Foreign Investments** were valued at R8.4 billion in 2017, and the Free State Province is becoming a destination of choice.

We will continue to work closely with our fellow BRICS countries Brazil, Russia, India and China, and countries on the African continent. We will also continue to advance our international solidarity agenda with countries like Portugal, Madeira and Turkey where we have realized significant partnerships and trade opportunities.

During this financial year, we will continue to hold the Global Investors Trade Bridge as part of the continuation of attracting lucrative investments into the Province. In addition we will establish in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry, a Free State Invest SA One Stop Shop to support this cause.

Manufacturing and Industrialization

We have worked hard to realize the growth of the manufacturing sector. For the period from 2006 to 2016, the manufacturing sector in terms of the GVA recorded an average annual growth rate of 1.12%. This sector furthermore experienced a growth in its contribution to the GVA over the ten year period, from R 14 billion in 2006 to R15.7 billion in 2016. The growth of this sector is credited to the revitalization of the Industrial Parks in Botshabelo and Phutadijhaba, amongst others.

The **Maluti-A-Phofung Special Economic Zone**, located in the eastern part of the Free State was officially launched by Former President of the Republic, Mr. Jacob Zuma on 25 April 2017.

The total projected investment to date is estimated at R550m for businesses which will be established in 2017/18 and 2018/19 financial years.

The MAP-SEZ is scheduled to start with construction of top structures in March 2018 to the value of R200m for new investors. Emanating from these investments approximately **Two Hundred and Fifty Five (255)** direct permanent jobs and **Four Hundred and Twenty (420)** indirect jobs will be created in 2018/2019 through the value chain.

A further estimate of 1700 temporary work opportunities will be created during the construction phase of these top structures as well as through phase 1 bulk services project, which commenced in September 2017.

We have entered into an agreement with the Department of Trade and Industry to support **Black Industrialists** with funding. Government will continue to source its goods and services from these black industrialists for an example, on linen and government uniforms and other commodities.

Creating Jobs through Infrastructure

During the past three financial years, we have spent over **Five Billion Nine Hundred Million Rand** on Infrastructure. Utilizing the job creation model of the Department of Labor and Stats SA, a total of **Twenty One Thousand Five Hundred and Forty Two (21542)** jobs have been created through these infrastructure projects across municipalities, provincial departments and entities.

In the Fezile Dabi District, we have spent over **One Billion on infrastructure projects** creating **Three Thousand Six Hundred and Seventy Three (3673)** work opportunities.

In Lejweleputswa District we have spent over **Eight Hundred and Forty Six Million Rand** creating **Three Thousand and Eighty Four (3084)** work opportunities.

In Xhariep District we have spent over **Two Hundred and Four Million Rand** creating **Seven Hundred and Forty Five (745)** work opportunities.

In Thabo Mofutsanyana District we have spent over **Two Billion Rand** creating **eight thousand and Thirteen (8013)** work opportunities.

In Mangaung Metro we have spent over **One Billion Two Hundred Million** in Infrastructure creating **Four Thousand Five hundred and Seventy Nine (4579)** work opportunities and furthermore, **One Thousand Four Hundred and Forty Seven (1447)** Jobs have been created in State Entity Projects. During this financial year those infrastructure projects will continue and those to be concluded will be finalized for the sustainability of these jobs.

On State Procurement

As at the 31 January 2018 we had spent **R4.7 billion** on SMME's through state procurement. **One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty Six (1 886)** SMME's benefited out of Free State Province's State Procurement.

Out of these SMMEs, **One Thousand Three Hundred and Ninety Six (1 396)**, or **74%**, are from the Free State Province, and **Four Hundred and Ninety (490)**, or **26%** are from outside the province.

Five Hundred and Eighty Five (585), or **31%**, of these SMMEs are owned by women, and **Five Hundred and Forty Seven (547)** **29%** are owned by young people. **Eight Hundred and Eleven (811)** SMMEs are white owned companies which is **43%** of State Procurement, and **One Thousand and seventy five (1075)** SMMEs are Black Owned SMMEs which is **57%** of total Procurement.

We will continue to focus on the transformation of procuring from local, black business, women from Rural and Township enterprises and from business people living with disabilities, we will furthermore ensure that **30%** set asides and sub – contracting are realized in the practical implementation of the changes in the PPPFA.

On SMME's and Co-operatives

We have supported **Two Thousand Six Hundred and Seventy (2 679)** SMMEs and Cooperatives over the 2017/18 financial year. These have been in various fields and sectors of the economy, both financial and non-financial support. Out of the 2679 SMMEs supported **Twenty Five Thousand and Sixty Five (25065)** job are sustained.

Township and Rural Enterprises

Township and Rural Economies are at the center of economic initiatives in the Province, to this end financial support specifically in investing in infrastructure to modernize and provide a facelift of our Townships. As part of these ongoing efforts, Constantia Park in Kroonstad, Moqhaka will be upgraded, and for the crafters and local beneficiaries to boost their local markets and attract tourist to the exquisite maloti route up to the golden gate National Park, we will establish a crafters SMME hub in Setsoto Municipality.

In our endeavour to ensure the sustained successes of our SMMEs in the province, we will continue to partner with Private Sector – to ensure black entrants into the market for greater state procurement opportunities.

We will therefore **increase the allocation** towards programme of youth entrepreneurs, rural enterprises, Township Economies as a practical testament to radical economic transformation agenda.

In furtherance of our goal to leverage on resources by different stakeholders in the agenda of skills revolution and economic empowerment, we will continue to work with the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) and various SETAs.

In the previous year, our commitment to work with different SETA's resulted in One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty One (1821) young people becoming involved in our Labour Activation Programmes such as Welding, Spray Painting and Panel Beating.

In the coming year, 1 200 beneficiaries will receive learnerships in different fields such as End User Computing, Community House Building and Waste Water Reticulation. A further 300 beneficiaries, through a Program facilitated by the Free State Development Corporation, will undergo learnership programs in plumbing and motor mechanic.

Through Free State Provincial government support, some of our panel beaters in the automotive sector have been accredited to do work for brands such as Mercedes Benz and Ford, furthermore they have now been accredited as a Standard Bank merchants as preferred service providers, lastly they have been accredited to complete work for government Garage.

The sustainability of our Township and Rural Enterprises are of utmost importance, it is therefore that out of our Black B&B programme, beneficiaries are taken through a grading system, invoice and hospitality training and central supplier database support to ensure that government procures services from our township and Rural B&B's.

As part of transforming the Wildlife economy, the Free State Provincial Government will continue to provide massive support to the development of Black Game farmers in partnership with established white game farmers.

Honourable Speaker, tourism remains an untapped market which, if fully taken advantage of, could create much needed jobs. Our reports show that 12.8 million tourists visited various destinations in the Free State in 2016. In the period between 2009 and 2016, the number of bed nights by tourists increased by an average of about 2% annually, and increased from 10.4 million to 12.8 million.

MACUFE remains our tourism mainstay. Although most of the people attending the festival are from the Free State, research has shown that the numbers of people from other provinces, particularly North West, Northern Cape and Eastern Cape have been gradually increasing.

Other Festivals such as the **Free State Madeira Flower Festival**, the **Ficksburg Cherry Festival and the Food Festival** are recorded to make an impact in the tourism sector since its inception.

Honourable Speaker, the persistently high rate of unemployment in the province is one of the most pressing socio-economic challenges facing government. High youth unemployment in particular means young people are not acquiring the skills or experience needed to drive the economy of the province forward.

We are mindful though that no single policy offers the solution; what is needed is a sustained comprehensive set of both short-term and long-term policy reforms and initiatives aimed at improving education and skills, and labour market interventions that improve the employability of young people. The Expanded Public Works Programme is one of those short-term initiatives by Government aimed to create work opportunities for the marginalized: women, youth and people with disabilities.

We had a target of creating **Sixty Two Thousand (62 000)** work opportunities in the 2017/18 financial year for all Public Bodies participating on EPWP within the Province. As at end of January 2018, we have created **Fifty Five Thousand Four Hundred and Sixty Three (55 463)** validated work opportunities, **Thirty Nine Thousand Four Hundred and Nine (39 409)** of those were women, **Twenty Five Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty One (25 861)** youth and **Five Hundred and Eighty Nine (589)** for people with disabilities.

The Township Revitalization Programme is the Provincial flagship initiative which aims at upgrading township roads from gravel to paving. This program expanded to Luckhoff, Koppies, Tweeling and Verkeerdevlei in the last year. The Programme will continue with the implementation of 22 towns in the 2018/19 financial year across all districts.

Our determination to leverage investment in infrastructure as a deliberate instrument to reverse the scourge of unemployment as well as the real challenge of poverty and inequality is noticeable in the performance of our province.

The Contractor Development Programme is a flagship programme of development of contractors in the Province. During the new financial year we are ensuring that all municipalities and all infrastructure departments are allocated funding towards this programme. The programme will be implemented through the Department of Police Roads and Transport, Public Works and DESTEA.

During the presentation of the State of the Province Address last year we announced that we will embark on the construction and maintenance of identified critical routes in the Province. We are delighted to report that, the following projects have been successfully completed during the 2017/18 financial year:

- **Kroonstad-Vredefort**
- **Harrismith Internal Routes**
- **Monontsha Border Post Road**
- **A56 Shannon Transport Route**
- **Flood Damage and Bridge Repair – Wepener**

In line with the announcement we made last year, we will, during the 2018/19 financial year continue to address road infrastructure backlogs through the completion of **10 additional** major roads construction. This will include the following roads:

- **Deneysville-Jim Fouche**
- **Viljoenskroon-Vredefort**
- **Bothaville-Viljoenskroon**
- **Hoopstad-Bultfontein**
- **Bothaville-Kroonstad**
- **Bultfontein-Welkom**

- **Wesselsbron-Bultfontein**
- **Hoopstad-Wesselsbron**
- **Wepener-Dewetsdorp**
- **Deneysville-Heilbron**
- **Sasolburg-Heilbron**
- **Kroonstad-Steynsrus**
- **Koppies-Schonkenville**

During the 2018/19 financial year the following EPWP multiyear projects will continue at an estimated budget of R85 million.

- **Vrede Transport Route;**
- **Thaba-Nchu Transport Route;**
- **Qwa Transport Route;**
- **Cornelia Access Roads;**
- **Tweeling Access Roads; and**
- **Rammolutsi Ring Road.**

It is expected that more than 5 550 work opportunities will be created through EPWP initiatives and capital projects throughout the province.

In the next financial year, additional four new EPWP projects will be implemented: **Three** in the **Xhariep District** and **One** in **Lejweleputswa District** at an estimated cost of R45 million, namely, **Relebohile (Luckhof Transport Route)**, **Zastron Internal Routes**, **Jacobsdal Transport Route** and **Dealsville, Transport Route**. It is expected that, during its implementation this programme will yield 270 job opportunities for our people.

Last year we announced the roll out of grass cutting at our provincial roads over a period of three years. During 2017/18 financial year 31 new maintenance contractors were appointed and 36 grass cutting contracts were awarded. To date a total number of

1 036 job opportunities have been created. The programme will continue during 2018/19 financial with an estimated budget of R33 million put aside and R90 million put aside for Contractor Development Programme.

SANRAL spends billions of Rand in the province on road infrastructure projects and maintenance. We have engaged and reached an agreement with them that Free State contractors with the necessary capacity will benefit from these projects.

Following the 54th national conference of the ANC and the call that the historic injustice of land dispossession needs to be addressed with great urgency as alluded to by President Cyril Ramaphosa, we will support any necessary legislative framework to bring this to reality.

Through the Land Reform processes, we have acquired the following for our people:

- 7 500 hectares equating to 17 farms worth R60 million
- 6 000 hectares of land have been allocated to small holder farmers
- 500 hectares have been allocated to farm dwellers
- One (1) farm has been allocated to youths who are agricultural graduates and
- 13 Land Restitution Claims have been finalized in our province and the land returned to the rightful owners.

We have completed the process of conducting a land audit for all the erven belonging to the state such as in public works, different state enterprises including the FDC as well as in municipalities. This land will be allocated to emerging black enterprises for both residential, business and agricultural purposes.

Through this intervention, we will be on course to stimulate economic activities where it matters most – the land.

(As of this current financial year, we will **commercialize 50 black farmers** in the province **per annum** (in the next five years) over the next five financial years starting from (2017/18). This will translate to about 250 black commercial producers developed by the end of the 2021/22 financial year.

This will be achieved through **Comprehensive Agricultural support Programme**, working closely with key role-players such as Land Bank, IDC, DTI, Commodity Groups etc. through Operation PHAKISA. This will be achieved by implementing the food production pillar to maximize food production by increasing production of small farmers by **Two Thousand Three Hundred and Seventy Seven (2 377)** hectares under production per year

We have embarked and on a vulnerability assessment baseline for the whole of the Free State and our expectation is that it will be completed by 2020, with the support from the South African Vulnerability Assessment Committee (SAVAC).

This will assist us to increase households involved in agricultural activities in back yard gardens from 145 782 households (15.4%) to 183 648 households 19.4% by 2020.

It is through such an initiative that we will also improve and uplift the economic wellbeing of rural women, youth and people with disabilities and create opportunities for them to participate in the development of their own communities and become active in agricultural projects and programmes.

3. PEACE AND STABILITY

Honourable Speaker, in 1993, during the peak of the negotiations for a democratic South Africa, South Africa experienced a shock after the brutal assassination of Martin Thembisile Hani. This incident sent shock waves throughout the country and nearly plunged the country into civil war. Nelson Mandela, who was the President of the ANC at the time, assumed the role of a statesman, and called for peace and restraint. His passion for peace and stability restored order and created an environment for negotiations to ensue.

In our quest towards radical economic transformation, a peaceful and stable environment is required. We have in the past demonstrated that, through multi-disciplinary collaboration relative success can be achieved and sustained in the fight against crime.

During the release of the South African Crime Statistics for the period April 2016 to March 2017 on the 24th of November 2017, our Province once again maintained the top spot in terms of the decline in a number of crime categories, making us the number 1 Province in the fight against crime. We will continue to ensure that our streets are clean as we fight crime and deal with illicit trade.

The multi-disciplinary approach adopted by the Province when launching the Provincial Crime Strategy in 2013 continues to bear fruits.

A brief gaze over the 2016/17 financial year statistics in our province shows a decline in the 17 community reported serious crimes. This reduction is reported in the following broad categories:

- Contact Crime: a reduction of -8.2%
- Contact Related Crime: a reduction of -12.5%
- Property Related Crime: a reduction of -2.9%
- Other Serious Crimes: a reduction of -0.7%

It should also be noted that the province has also recorded a slight but significant improvement in reducing crimes such as murder which is considered a stubborn crime, car hijacking and truck hijacking. Through commitment and dedication of the SAPS and our collaborative efforts, murder has shown a slight decline of -4.3%, car hijacking by -9.3% and truck hijacking by -36.9% and this is a clear indication that with time we will be able to win the fight against crime and ensure that our people feel safe and live in a crime free environment as envisaged in the National Development Plan.

We thank and congratulate our law enforcement agencies for their commitment and dedication in fighting all forms of crime. We also thank community policing forums and other civil society formations for their sterling partnership.

During the presentation of the State of the Province address in the previous year, we used the occasion to welcome the appointment of the new Provincial Commissioner, Lieutenant-General Lebeoana Tsumane. Today we want to take this opportunity to thank him for his service in the province and congratulate him on his appointment as Deputy National Police Commissioner

Let me also take this opportunity to thank our police officers for winning several awards at the South African police service excellence awards last year. These distinguished men and women in blue scooped a number of prizes, making us proud indeed. We also congratulate our members in the Free State for winning the crime intelligence team of the year award.

We appreciate the work done by our road traffic officers during the festive season in reducing road fatalities by 26% and we also thank the majority of our road users for abiding by the rules of the road.

To address the challenge of shortage of officers, we have appointed 64 examiners at our testing stations to relieve traffic officers of this responsibility so that we can increase our visibility on the roads.

We are happy to report that in the same spirit, we shall, during the 2018/19 financial year be appointing additional number of 120 examiners and this will ensure more officers are on the road and also accelerate the turn-around time for testing of applicants.

To enhance community participation in road safety initiatives and consultation, which are both necessary requirements in the provision of services. The province undertake to conduct Community Indabas, Taxi Indabas and Driving School Indabas as part of the road safety strategy meant to unite all spheres and road users at large. The new approach of 365 days road safety will include Child Road Safety Education and Door-to-Door campaigns.

4. CAPACITY OF THE STATE

The Capacity of the South African state to implement the policies, deliver services and expedite programmes, is the epicenter of our agenda for the attainment of a democratic developmental state.

During December 2017, we hosted a very successful Service Delivery Expo to showcase both our local and provincial government's service delivery achievements.

We have learned very valuable lessons regarding our strengths and challenges regarding the delivery of service to our people, especially relating to provision of basic services such as water, electricity, sanitation and refuse removal during the Expo.

We have intensified our implementation of the Back to Basics programme to ensure that the State builds the necessary capacity to fulfill its obligation. We have ensured that all critical vacancies at local and provincial government are filled.

We have ensured that all positions of Heads of Departments and Municipal Managers are filled, except at Maluti A Phofung local municipality.

To deal with some governance challenges, we have invoked section 139 (1) b of the Constitution in three of our municipalities, Mafube, Masilonyana and Maluti A Phofung. We are seeing a lot of improvement and recovery in Mafube and Masilonyana and the provincial government will withdraw in the next two months. However, the intervention in Maluti A Phofung is very recent and will be closely monitored going forward.

Metsimaholo local municipality in July 2017 was dissolved in terms of Section 139 (4) of the Constitution and the elections were held on the 27th of November 2017. The council has been properly constituted and showing signs of improvement of relations between different political parties to govern with common purpose.

We call on our municipalities to continue to identify and employ people who are skilled and capable to perform their tasks to strengthen service delivery to our people.

The Free State Training and Development Institute (FSTDI) is geared to provide in-service training and development to our public servants. The FSTDI, in building the capacity of the state, has provided the following skills programmes:

Cleaners and Gardeners programmes – (232 officials)

Security Protocol Training - (3081 officials)

Various Training Programmes - (6201 officials)

In our agenda to increase internal capacity of the state through empowering staff with skills and knowledge, we have availed bursaries to employees working in different departments. We are currently funding **One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty Nine (1 829)** employees who are pursuing undergraduate studies in various fields. We have also assisted a total of **One Hundred and Fifty Three (153)** employees to pursue postgraduate qualifications.

The postgraduate students funded by the provincial government can be divided as follows;

- Honours Degrees: 43
- Masters Degrees: 73

- PhD Degrees: 37

We continue to fight fraud and corruption in both the public service and the private sector. We will be holding an anti-corruption conference in conjunction with all law enforcement agencies on the 1st and 2nd of March 2018. The intention is to develop clear strategies that we will employ to fight fraud and corruption in the province.

Provincial Treasury has continued to capacitate officials on the recent developments and techniques in fraud management. Four fraud awareness sessions were held in our respective districts, including Mangaung Metro.

Building on the success of 2016/17 where 17 officials qualified as Certified Fraud Examiners (CFEs), a further 18 officials from our different departments have been identified for training as CFEs in 2017/18.

To ensure that the Province reduces its cumulative Irregular Expenditure that dates as far back as 2007, the Free State Provincial Treasury introduced an intervention in terms of Section 18 of the PFMA and initiated a process of investigating irregular expenditure of previous years in the departments of Health, Education and Human Settlements, this project will expand to include department of Sports Arts Culture and Recreation, Agriculture and Rural Development as well as Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs.

We are concerned that our audit outcomes have shown a regression in some of our provincial departments in the last two years.

We have requested Treasury to put together an intervention team that will work directly with these affected departments to turn the situation around.

We welcome the fact that our municipalities are showing a significant improvement in their audit outcomes. We note the fact that only three municipalities have a disclaimer audit opinion compared to previous years such as 2009 we had 13 disclaimers and 1 adverse audit opinion.

We will continue to strengthen the capacity of traditional leaders to service their communities through providing further tools of trade, resources and training.

This year, we will ensure that the five traditional communities are able to take their rightful place in the municipal councils where they exist in terms of Section 81 of the Municipal Structures Act. This move will strengthen integrated planning between municipalities and traditional authorities.

Motsamaisi wa dipuisano ya hlomphehang, mothating ona, re lakatsa ho kgutsa le ho romela matshediso a tswang botebong ba dipelo tsa rona, ho ya lelapeng la Borena l a Bakoena Ba Mopeli ha mmoho le setjhaba sa Bakoena, ka tahlehelo ya tshohanyetso ya Morena e moholo, Thokoana Mopeli, mathwasong a selemo sena.

Re tla emela ho thonywa ha mohlahlami ke lelapa la boreneng la Bakoena, hore re le mmuso re tle re kgone ho hlomamisa mohlahlami wa Morena e Moholo.

Komishene ya dingangisano tse di kaga bogosi le tlhatlhamano e konoseditse ngangisano ya bogosi jwa **Barolong Boo Seleka**, mme go tlile go tlhongwamoeteledipe le yo o maleba mo sebakeng sa dikgwedi dile pedi tse di tlang.

We endorse and support the **Small Town Regeneration Programme** by the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). Through this programme resources from state and private institutions shall be mobilised and channeled to support the local economic development and turnaround programmes of our small towns.

The Provincial Government working closely with SALGA shall participate and support the implementation of the **Karoo Regional Development Initiative (KDI)** which is a multi-jurisdictional regional economic development programme involving four Provinces of WC, EC, NC & FS. Through the creation of this region, local economies, of at least 33 municipalities in four Provinces stand to directly benefit from the implementation of the Karoo Development Initiative. Already, Xhariep DM and its locals as well as Masilonyana, Matjhabeng and the rural parts of Mangaung Metro have been earmarked to form part of this initiative.

To facilitate the legal declaration of this economic development region, Free State Government shall give the required concurrence for the creation of the Karoo Development Region in terms of section 18 of the Spatial Land Use Management Act of 2015 (SPLUMA: 2015). SALGA working closely with relevant Provincial Departments will spearhead the implementation of this initiative.

In an effort to bring government services closer to the people, as well as to stimulate local economies in our townships, small towns and villages, we have successfully established offices where government services can be offered. The decentralization program has already happened in the following areas:

Ratlou Complex in Thaba Nchu

The following Departments have already started operating in the Centre:

- Home Affairs
- Department of the Premier Contact Centre
- Department of Social Development
- Department of Economic, Small Business, Tourism & Environmental Affairs
- Department of Police, Roads & Transport

Our Departments of Education and Sport, Arts and Culture will also occupy offices in this centre in the new financial year.

Parys

The following Departments are operating within Parys CBD:

- Department of Social Development
- Department of Economic, Small Business, Tourism & Environmental Affairs
- Department of Police, Roads & Transport

Boitumelo Junction Mall in Thabong, Welkom.

- Department of the Premier
- Police, Roads and Transport

- Human Settlements
- Social Development
- Economic, Small Business, Tourism and Environmental Affairs
- Agriculture and Rural Development
- Health

The following Departments, namely Home Affairs and Sassa will occupy space at the centre in the new financial year.

Lemo mall in Mangaung,

- Public works and
- social development

Tweeling

- Social development

More of our government offices will move to townships as we bring services closer to the people of the province.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the opportunity provided to me to serve the people of the Free State since 1994. It has indeed been a challenging, but exciting journey.

It is common knowledge that I will be leaving the Free State at the end of March this year. This is in line with the decision of my political party, the ANC, which has directed me to serve on a full time basis as the Secretary General, where I will be based at the ANC Headquarters, Luthuli House.

As I have done during my long and dedicated service in this beloved Province of ours I will with the new duties that I have been deployed to by the ANC continue to work full-out for the full liberation of our people in every regard - also and especially their economic liberation. In this province we must continue to work day and night for the implementation of Radical Socio-economic Transformation (RET), and similarly we must do so throughout

our country. In my new deployment as Secretary General (SG) of the ANC I will tirelessly and with singular dedication work to build the branches and structures of the ANC in order to achieve this throughout the country. But the Free State being my home province you will always continue to occupy a special place in my heart. I have no doubt that you will continue with the great work we have been doing here, while always remembering that whatever we do must be in the service of our people and to secure a better life for them all. I know that you will continue to make me proud!

I would therefore like to thank the following people and organizations for their immeasurable support during this long journey. The African National Congress and its Alliance Partners; Former and Current Members of the Executive Council; Former and Current Members of the Legislature; our public servants in all spheres of government, our social partners including Marena, members of the business community, leaders of our local government sphere; inter faith leaders; institutions of higher learning and the people of the Free State at large, the international Lesotho, Angola, Russia, Rwanda, Mozambique, Cuba, turkey Germany, Portugal, Madeira etc.. and the people of our lovely country South Africa.

One of the most outstanding revolutionaries of the African continent, the son of the humbled people of Guinea Bissau, says the following **"Let us be precise: for us, African, revolution means the transformation of our present life in the direction of progress. The prerequisite for this is the elimination of foreign economic domination, on which every other type of domination is dependent. We are for African unity, on a regional or continental scale, in as far as it is necessary for the progress of the African peoples, and in order to guarantee their security and the continuity of this progress"**.

In conclusion, we borrow the words of wisdom from the father of the people of Latin America, Simon Bolivar, when he says, we are the children of storm, men and women of difficulties, even when we are faced by adversity, we must fight and fight until it obeys us.

We have to be resilient and continue with our common determination to take forward our struggles for radical socio economic transformation. In any revolution, there is no bed of roses.

‘Unity for common prosperity against poverty’

Let us then work together to achieve the year of Unity, Renewal and Jobs!

Ke a leboha! Dankie! Ndiyabonga! Ngiyabonga! Ke a leboga! Thank You!