



## 2001 STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS BY PREMIER, MS I.W. DIREKO

16 February 2001

Hon Acting Speaker,  
hon Members of the Executive Council,  
hon Members of the Legislature,  
hon Members of National Parliament,  
Permanent Delegates of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP),  
hon Mayors and Councillors,  
Marena le Dikgosi,  
distinguished guests,  
ladies and gentlemen.

When we first assumed office six years ago, we inherited a dismal but challenging situation, which demanded that our Government and the society as a whole should engage in the sustainable process of fundamentally transforming our Province.

The main features of our inheritance remain, amongst others:

- High levels of poverty;
- High levels of unemployment;
- Low levels of economic growth;
- A racially divided Province; and
- Acute socio-economic inequalities, which resulted in the dis-empowerment of mainly blacks in general, and African women in particular.

This legacy of centuries of colonialism and apartheid is to be engaged with in the context of the African Renaissance and unprecedented levels of globalisation.

The leading force in the African Renaissance movement, President Mbeki, once declared that:

“An essential and necessary element of the African Renaissance is that we must take it as our task to encourage her (meaning Africa), who carries this leaden weight, to rebel, to assert the principality of her humanity – the fact that she, in the first instance, is not a beast of burden, but a human and African being”.

According to him:

“The simple phrase – we are our own liberators! – is the epitaph on the gravestone of every African who dared to carry the vision in his or her heart of Africa reborn”.

The responsibilities imposed by the President's assertions demands that our new phase of struggle be to rebel against backwardness, poverty, ignorance, disease and to ensure that our country and our continent benefits from the developmental possibilities implied in the

progressive rebellion suggested by the African Renaissance. This is why we should support the Millennium Africa Renaissance Programme.

In our march to ensure Africa's rebirth, we must take full advantage of all opportunities arising from the globalisation of the world's economies. As hon President Mbeki recently said at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland, Davos, 28 January 2001:

“The choice for countries of the South is not whether to engage with globalisation or not, but how to engage with it. It is essential for governments and people to engage with the process critically, to re-shape and re-direct its impact. The objective must be to enhance citizens' incorporation and access to the benefits of globalisation, while minimising polarisation and social exclusion, and mitigating these effects when and where they do occur.”

Observing the above injunctions in response to the African Renaissance and globalisation requires a totally new effort in building a new Free State Province. We need to build a new Free Stater, someone who has a culture of caring, willing to face challenges, who can compete without fear, educated and learned, disciplined, trustworthy and efficient.

A Free Stater who displays hard work, perseverance, excellence, ethical conduct and a commitment to the creation of a better life for all. Such a vision must inform us when we appoint our MECs, Members of the Provincial Legislature, Heads of Departments, and public servants. It must also inform our interaction with our principal stakeholders, particularly the ordinary men and women whose poverty-stricken circumstances require decisive action from the Provincial Government.

A Free Stater who upholds high moral values, and respect for the law. A reliable and conscientious worker, who makes his contribution in the building of the economy. A tolerant Free Stater who jealously builds a non-racial and non-exploitative society.

The question, then, becomes what have we done so far in building a new Free State?

Today, significant progress has been achieved in line with our promise and commitment to deliver a better life.

We developed and launched the Provincial Strategic Plan through which the following were achieved:

We developed a new vision, which demands of us to be –

“A unified Free State Province with a vibrant economy, providing for sustainable growth and development and equitable opportunities for all, to achieve and sustain an improved quality of life”.

In pursuit of this vision, we agreed on three clear priorities, which are:

- The provision of infrastructure and housing;
- Job creation and economic growth; and
- Human resource development – because it is in developing our human resource that we are guaranteed of success in our efforts to create a better life for all.

The highlights of the process of implementing our Strategic Plan reflects our commitment to an integrated approach to service delivery. One of our key deliverables was the launch of our Provincial Poverty Eradication Strategy on 19 October 2000, which was led by our social cluster and Department of Social Development.

Our multi-pronged approach to poverty alleviation saw us approve R3 million allocated to five projects in *Maluti-a-Phofung*, and the Southern Free State.

Through our Community-Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP), we will focus on identified pockets of poverty within the rural areas and target female households with dependants. We can only be happy if our rural people are allowed to cash up with us then we shall have achieved true liberation from poverty. We have started with the *Maluti-a-Phofung* Municipality in the Eastern Free State where our focus will be on repairing damage caused by floods, upgrading infrastructure and rehabilitating roads.

In Thaba Nchu we have started with major maintenance of main connecting roads to adjacent areas by regravelling and blading. Through this, a number of temporary jobs were created.

We have dealt with most potholes in the provincial road network and we are now focusing on, amongst others, rehabilitating the Ficksburg/Clocolan Road.

We have allocated R2,6 million in which our Departments of Public Works, Roads, and Transport, and Environmental Affairs and Tourism will develop six tourism routes. These are the Mangaung Route, the Maluti Route, the Diamond and Wine Route, the Goldfields Route, the Intabazwe Route and the Bloemfontein/Thaba Nchu Heritage Route.

I am also pleased to announce that for the first time in many years we have an infrastructure allocation dedicated to the maintenance and construction of our road network and buildings.

Following its projection to have 8 000 to 10 000 completely constructed houses per annum, I am happy to announce that the Department of Local Government and Housing has, from the 1st of April 2000 to date, completed 10 507 houses spread across all towns in the Free State. Of this figure, 1 200 houses were realised by more than 32 well-established Housing Support Centres in the Province. These Housing Support Centres provide ideally bigger structures than the normal 40 square metre houses and are largely women-driven.

Like all Free Staters, the Provincial Government is very concerned about the low level of economic growth and the small number of jobs available in the provincial labour market. In addressing this concern, our Department of Agriculture needs to speed up the process of land reforms in partnership with the Department of Land Affairs and Public Works, to ensure that the Community Support Project Fund initiates farming projects and creates jobs for our rural communities where they are. We need to assist them to dip their buckets where they are. In partnership with Commercial Farmers, the Agricultural Union and local institutions the Province must develop an Agricultural Investment Strategy to ensure that our products become competitive in overseas markets, particularly in terms of price and quality.

Such a strategy must assist us to improve our performance in the agricultural sector, increase the number of black Commercial Farmers and create agro-industries within the Province.

The above initiatives will be complemented by our efforts in attracting capital and investment through tourism marketing, and the exhibition of the various products and business

opportunities in the Province in forums such as the South African International Trade Exhibition (SAITEX).

I am pleased to announce that at the last SAITEX held in October 2000 where 798 exhibitors, of which 76,5 % were international exhibitors, the Free State Province won the Gold award, which is the highest award in the exhibition. As a result, 350 enquiries were received from companies interested in specific products from different regions of the Free State, as well as possible investment.

In addition, the Provincial Government will establish manufacturing advice centres in the South-west Free State, as well as Local Business Service Centres in the Southern Free State, Mangaung, the Northern Free State, the Goldfields area, as well as the Eastern Free State.

In January of this year we launched the Matjhabeng Industrial Park in Welkom. This is the only Industrial Park of its nature that is now fully operational out of the initial three such projects countrywide.

We have successfully restructured our Provincial Youth Commission, to bring it in line with the restructuring of the National Youth Commission, and to ensure it becomes more effective and efficient. The restructuring process will have the effect of making more money available for youth development programmes as a result of reducing the number of commissioners. The appointment of the Chief Executive Officer of the Youth Commission will ensure more efficiency and independence.

The Provincial Government has established a Multi-Purpose Centre in Namahadi in Qwaqwa which minimise the burden on the already poverty stricken members of the communities in Qwaqwa – it cut out unnecessary travelling because referrals happen within the same center. We aim to launch three multi-purpose centres this year in Botshabelo, Thaba Nchu, and in Phuthaditjhaba. The last two will be launched in 2002 in Trosburg and Zastron.

With regard to HIV/AIDS, we have established the Provincial Aids Council, through which an Aids Education and Awareness Campaign is being implemented. Since we all agreed that this is one of the biggest threats facing this Province, and the nation as a whole, no stone should be left unturned in fighting this scourge.

The Provincial Government has established pilot research areas for the treatment of HIV positive pregnant mothers in Virginia and Frankfort. The purpose of this initiative is to reduce the transmission of the HIV/AIDS virus from mother to infants – anybody saying this country and this province specifically is not doing what it should in the area of HIV/AIDS must go and think again.

We have also resolved to establish a Directorate on HIV/AIDS whose sole responsibility will be to co-ordinate all inter-departmental activities and initiatives on HIV/AIDS.

Our commitment to co-operative governance saw the re-launch of the Provincial-Local Government Forum (PROVLOC), which created a platform for us and local authorities to deal amicably with issues of mutual interest. To ensure a united Province with unity of purpose, it is my intention to invite all Executive Mayors into this forum, which will meet regularly to discuss strategies of dealing with issues relating to poverty particularly and integrated development programmes.

I also hope that PROVLOC will be an appropriate forum to deal with environmental issues, and promote the notion of a clean and healthy environment with the hope of ensuring ecologically sustainable development and proper use of our natural resources.

In implementing our strategic plan we have established a Provincial Transformation Forum, which recommended that the Provincial Government should convene a Provincial Dialogue on Racism. I am happy to announce that the Executive Council has approved that the Office of the Premier should start immediately to convene such a gathering. It is only when peace rains among the people of the Free State that we will achieve progress and one can only hope that this forum will provide an opportunity for us to withered areas of differences and getting to the role of being real Free Staters for the benefit of the whole Free Staters

We all know our historical past. I also do not have to remind you that racism did not die with the establishment of the new government. It is important therefore that we create an opportunity to discuss and develop consensus on how to rid our Province of this affliction of racism, as well as implement the recommendations of the recent National Conference on Racism.

Some of you would recall the dire financial crisis that our Province was in during the 1998/99 financial year. I am happy to remind you that during the 2000/01 financial year our management of the provincial fiscus has improved significantly. We even managed to accumulate a surplus for the first time in many years and we were able to pay our debts. [Applause] We are looking after the Province's cents and rands, millions will look after themselves.

I want to assure everybody who does business with us that we will continue to improve the way we handle our finances, and ensure that none of you is compromised in any way. It is my intention as Head of this Province that niemand die publiek sê geld in sy sak sal steek nie.

It is with great pride that I congratulate our Department of Education, students and parents for their commitment and hard work in ensuring that our Matric results showed an improvement of 10.6 % compared to the previous year. [Applause] This demonstrates that our pursuit of our human resource development strategic priority is beginning to bear some fruit. Whilst this is not enough, I must hasten to warn teachers because I shall continue making my rounds in the schools. It did not end in January it is going to be a continuous process. I will continue and I would like to assure you of my personal support and that of many Free Staters of goodwill to ensure that we do even better in this year's examinations.

In 1999, a total of 151 dysfunctional schools were identified. This year this figure has been reduced to 126 schools. Our efforts in improving the management of these schools will include filling many vacant posts of deputy principals, heads of department, and administrative staff. We will also strengthen School Governing Bodies, School Management Teams as well as Representative Councils of Learners.

Our Department of Health will establish the Mangaung Health Centre, which will provide 24-hour services, as well as emergency and maternity services. It will also focus on reducing backlogs in cataract surgery. This will be with the purpose of reducing the number of people who become blind due to cataracts.

The payment of social grants is one of our methods of sustaining the lives of our poor people. To protect the integrity of this system, through our Department of Social Welfare, we started a re-registration process aimed at distinguishing between those who qualify for these grants and those who did not. This process was finalised in July 2000 and out of a total of 199 719

beneficiaries, we established that 3 348 did not qualify. This exercise resulted in savings of about R22 million.

We also identified a backlog of 54 000 applicants who were not on the system, to date 51 000 of these applicants have been brought back to the system and we will soon wipe out the remaining backlogs.

We have successfully implemented the demarcation process and we now have a Province that is divided into five regions. The recent municipal election results, signals the complete transformation of all tiers of government.

Through our Department of Local Government and Housing, we will undertake a number of initiatives to consolidate and strengthen the outcome of the transformation of local government.

We are fully aware of the need to continue building the capacity of municipalities in order to improve their performance. We will continue with our Project Viability Initiative to monitor the viability of municipalities, and build their financial management capabilities. Just remember that money is the taxpayers money and it must be properly managed. We will also provide the necessary management support and contribute to the training of new councillors to enable them to perform duties attached to their new offices.

I hope that new councillors will lead the promotion of timely payment of accounts for services rendered by municipalities. We must pay for our services. It doesn't matter who you are and where you are. I also expect that the Executive Council will soon be informed about the finalisation of a framework for free water and electricity supply to the poorest of the poor in our Province.

This year, the Year of the African Century, we must ensure that all our people are free to practice and profess their customs, culture and beliefs, and yet feel a sense of belonging to the Province, Country and the Continent. Through our Department of Sport, Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, we will be hosting and launching Indigenous Sports in the first quarter of this year.

As a commitment to the further development and celebration of our culture and traditions, the Mangaung Cultural Festival (MACUFE), will be revived and will take place in September, and we will also be hosting the third international Grand Prix at our Phakisa Racetrack. [Applause].

Since this year is also declared as The Year of the Reader, my plea to all leaders and fellow Free Staters is to visit our Libraries and inspire the youth to use these facilities, because information is power.

Our strategy of embarking on an intelligence-led crime prevention strategy in partnership with local communities and the private sector is bearing fruit. We will continue to implement social crime prevention strategies and uproot corruption with the involvement of the private sector. It is not the Government that should be the watchdog. It is not the Legislature that should do this job, it is you ordinary man and woman. You are the custodian of what belongs to this Province and are obliged to keep your eyes and ears open and also open your mouth to speak the truth without any fear of victimisation rather than keeping quite and gaining cheap popularity – because cheap popularity in my experience does not last. The ball is in your court as members of our community.

The Free State Provincial Government remains accountable to the citizens of the Free State. Last year the Executive Council rotated its meetings amongst the newly created districts of our Province. Our agenda was simply to promote interaction and accountability to the citizens. This year, we will continue with the same process and I will invite the Legislature, Executive Council, Mayoral Committees and councillors to join me in that regard.

In my travels throughout the Province, one of the issues that were consistently raised was the slowness of our departments in delivering services. When you have a meal every night just remember the ordinary man and woman who depends on you to deliver services and do not have restful night if you do not achieve this. It is your responsibility as a leader in this Province to care. This makes me realise that the transformation of our departments is far from complete.

During the course of this year, we have to deal with the following challenges:

- We have to improve stability in our departments by ensuring effective and efficient political and administrative management;
- I have studied the various developments with regard to matters relating to boards of the Free State Provincial Government and I will make an announcement in due course;
- We have to improve relations between departments and the Provincial Legislature particularly in terms of information flow and responsiveness to queries and needs of both parties – no man is an island we need to work together as a team.
- We have to improve our planning and operational ability to meet targets and deadlines;
- We have to improve the quality of our supervision and management; - that is your business as managers.
- We have to improve capacity to monitor and evaluate the achievement of our targets. It must not be business as usual.
- We will continue to ensure that our programmes and projects focus on our poverty-stricken districts such as Thabo Mofutsanyane and Xhariep. Members of the Executive Council will elaborate on this matter in their budget speeches.

Achieving the full development of the Free State Province is not a task that can be achieved by the Provincial Government alone. We realise the need to establish partnerships with those who are keen to form such partnerships with us, of particular importance are the business people, religious leaders, the House of Traditional Leaders, social groupings from the Afrikaner Community, the *Koranas*, non-governmental organisations and other interest groups in the Province.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the people of this Province for their continued and valued support to the Government and its programmes. To the Members of the Executive Council, Members of the Legislature, the Director-General and Heads of Departments, as well as to each and every public servant, my appreciation for your dedication and hard work in the interest of the people of this Province. This Province must be reborn, it must succeed and we will succeed.

In instilling hope to the people of the Free State, I would like you to join me in drawing inspiration from the poetry of *Mongane Wally Serote, Longer Poems*, when he says:

"I  
I ask  
For I love life  
I ask  
Let's dare to be different  
In this time  
Here where life has become a dangerous species  
Made so  
By plenty and wretched poverty  
Let the wretched of our time  
the men  
children  
the women  
who witness the sun rise and the sun set  
the moon climb and the moon fall  
the star twinkle and fade  
every day every hour bewildered by life  
let them see in our eye  
our dare for the mighty  
let our eye in its unshakeable belief teach them to catch a fish  
and to refuse to be given it."

I thank you.