



the premier

Department of  
the Premier  
FREE STATE PROVINCE

## ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY FREE STATE PREMIER, BEATRICE MARSHOFF

26 April 2004

Today we are celebrating yet another historic moment in our ten years of Freedom, the inauguration of the third Legislature in our democratic Free State. As we prepared this country for the celebrations of our maiden decade of freedom and democracy, the Government and the ruling party, African National Congress, made an in-depth assessment of the advances we made as a nation in the last 10 years. The results of the government's performance were made known to the people of the province and the country.

During the period leading to the third democratic elections, the ANC criss-crossed the province in the door-to-door campaign and urged our people to enter into a contract to ensure that we fight poverty and create work. Our people spoke directly to the leadership and encouraged ANC to do even better. Our people told ANC what they wanted.

On the 14th April no less than 81% of the population of this province, black and white, young and old, men and women exercised their democratic right to elect a government of their choice. More than 82% of voters gave ANC a resounding mandate to govern the province for greater good of all the people of the Free State.

As I take oath of the highest office in the Province today, I openly commit myself to ensuring that all structures of governance work towards making a difference in the lives of people of the Free State. I commit myself to ensure that the Executive Council, the legislature, government departments, municipalities and state agencies work in perfect harmony and guarantee a better life for the people of the province.

I openly invite the DA and the ACDP as public representatives to partner the ANC in serving the people of the Free State. We have all the reasons to work together in making Free State a better place.

We have been mandated by the overwhelming majority of the province and country to respond to the concerns raised by our people. They include unemployment, poverty, crime and the treatment of HIV and AIDS.

Our people have spoken and we cannot and should not fail them. I therefore call upon everybody to join me in a collective effort to create much-needed jobs in order to lift from the shoulders of our people a huge burden of poverty. I have travelled the length and breadth of this province and know first hand the devastating impact of poverty on our people. Poverty, HIV and AIDS and violence are causing an untold damage to women and children in our communities.

As a nation we are faced with a new phenomenon and we have to successfully deal with it. The number of women-headed household is in drastic increase. This is also the case with orphans of AIDS in our communities. We will need all hands on deck if we are to reverse this devastation. Statistics do not tell a good story in this regard. We are told that unemployment is increasing among African women, particularly in rural areas. Incidence of poverty among women and child headed families is frighteningly high.

These troubling matters need our attention and now. Let us therefore acknowledge that women as majority of the poorest of the poor should and will receive our attention as government. I draw my inspiration in this regard from the words of Pregs Govender, former ANC MP during her address of the third Ruth First Memorial Lecture recently. She said, " The challenge is to ensure that in the work

we do we respect the power and the agency of women, without the paternalistic temptation to reduce women to victims. Those who hold office are called upon to fully understand and be true to this mandate, not as an act of charity but as an act of competence as MP's".

I am indeed satisfied that my predecessors have done commendable work in laying a foundation to deal with these social ills. The Free State Development Plan and the Growth and Development Plan will remain at the centre of our onslaught against poverty and under development in our province.

Our first step in this direction is to consider how effective our plans and programmes are in dealing with the effects of dual economy on majority of our people. This should start with how we tell the story of Free State. As we tell the story of the riches of this province through agriculture and mining and petro-chemicals let us not be tempted to leave out the story of the majority of our people in Thabo Mofutsanyane, Xhariep and the far flung areas of Thaba Nchu, Botshabelo and squatter camps of Lejweleputswa, who do not have hope for employment. When we tell the Free State story we first have to think about these people and their plight before we talk about the riches and the opulence of some parts of the Free State, in that way they will forever be in our minds.

As I accept this challenge as the leader and the representative of the people in the second decade of freedom I promise to consolidate further the gains of our social transformation of the first ten years of governance. To public servants I wish to say. You have made us proud in the past five years; there is no time to relent. You have to double your efforts to ensure that we remain up there with the best. I will still make an opportunity to speak directly with all public servants in due course.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the African National Congress, the leadership and the rank and file. Let us all work for a better Free State, a better South Africa and a better World.