

**State of the Province Address by Honourable Premier E.S. Magashule
during the official opening of the Free State Legislature**

26 February 2010 - Vista University Arena, Bloemfontein

Honourable Speaker & Deputy Speaker of the Free State Legislature
Honourable Members of the Executive Council
Honourable Members of the Legislature
Honourable Members of the National Assembly and the NCOP
Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Provincial Secretary of the ANC, Cde Besani
Executive Mayors, Mayors and Councilors
Distinguished members of our House of Traditional Leaders
Director General and government officials
Provincial Commissioners of SAPS and Correctional Services
Director General and government officials
Representatives of organized labour
Veterans and stalwarts of our struggle
Baahi ba Free State
Baahi ba Afrika Borwa
Comrades and friends

I greet you all on this occasion of our second State of the Province Address during the current term of this legislature. Honourable Speaker, I dedicate this address to the late well-known professional boxer, Mlungisi Dlamini from Kwa Zulu Natal. His parents are present here today, as guests of the Premier. We would like to say to you that we have lost a great boxer, the man who was passionate about boxing, the man who was a boxer all the time.

I also want to acknowledge the legal representatives who assisted us during the struggle and whose unwavering support during difficult and challenging times, we could always rely on. I wish to acknowledge the presence of Bertus Venter, Zola Majavu, Jerome Mthembu, Mosheen Moosa and Judge Margie Victor amongst us today.

2010 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Honourable Speaker, the year 2010 marks two memorable events that will continue to define the history of our country and our people. This year marks the occasion that the icon of our people, Isithwalandwe Seaparankwe Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela, was released from prison. We, the people of the Free State, would like to join the rest of the country in honouring Madiba as a true legend, patriot and time-tested leader of all the people of South Africa and the world.

Today when we celebrate 20 years of the freedom of our icon Madiba, allow me to briefly retrace our steps to the year 1988 and quote the former President of the ANC, OR Tambo, when he said "One person has come to embody the aspirations of all the South African people – Nelson Mandela.

His life symbolises our people's burning desire for freedom, his imprisonment is the imprisonment of the whole South African nation, the fight for his unconditional release, and all political prisoners and detainees, is the glorious fight against injustices, racial bigotry, and man's inhumanity to man".

We will continue to sing a song that says "Nelson Mandela, ha hona ya tshwanang lewena." Tata Madiba, you belong to that exclusive club of great leaders and stalwarts such as your close friend and mentor, the late Comrade Walter Sisulu, your close confidante and fellow combatant, the late Comrade Oliver Reginald Tambo and our great leader and commander of the glorious people's army, the late Comrade Chris Hani.

The international community has confirmed its respect and recognition of Madiba's long-standing commitment to promote conflict resolution, race relations, human rights, reconciliation and gender equality. Late last year, the 192-member United Nations General Assembly declared 18 July as "Nelson Mandela International Day". This is the first time the UN has dedicated a day to a single individual. Mandela Day serves as a catalyst for each and every person to realise that they have the ability to change the world through action.

This year we will continue to build on the initiatives we undertook last year and we will join the global community in the annual celebration of “Nelson Mandela International Day” on 18 July, Madiba’s birthday. We invite each and every individual, organisation, the private and public sector to join forces in realising the lesson that Madiba taught us; “It’s in our hands” to make the world a better place.

The release of Nelson Mandela was not an isolated moment in history. It was indeed the result of the struggle led by the African National Congress against apartheid through mass action and mass defiance, armed struggle, international isolation and diplomatic engagement. This is precisely why we must pay tribute to the struggling masses of this country.

The year 2010 also commemorates the un-banning of the African National Congress, the South African Communist Party and a number of other organisations. Honourable Speaker, in 2012, the African National Congress will be celebrating its centenary.

It will be celebrating 100 years of unbroken struggle to free our people from the yoke of colonialism and racial oppression and build a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society. The African National Congress will return to its birthplace, Mangaung, to celebrate its centenary and Batho in particular, will be host to events that will unfold to celebrate this historic occasion.

But the year 2010 will also be imprinted in our history as the year that South Africa and Africa will host the biggest sporting event in the world, namely the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup. We are proud and honoured to contribute to the creation of modern and living history through this event.

PRIORITIES

Honourable Speaker and Deputy Speaker, the programmes of the national and provincial government are driven by the priorities we outlined in the Elections Manifesto, the Medium-Term Strategic Framework and the ANC's January 8 statement. The Presidency has taken the decisive lead in introducing the new outcome-based approach of government.

In the State of the Nation Address, President Zuma confirmed the following five priority areas;

- Education
- Health
- The creation of decent work and sustainable livelihoods
- Rural development, food security and land reform
- The fight against crime and corruption

In addition, President Zuma confirmed that government will also work to improve the effectiveness of local government, infrastructure development and human settlements.

We will harness the individual efforts of all provincial departments and public entities to work together to achieve the determined outcomes. Our efforts will further be strengthened as we align our plans and programmes with that of local and district municipalities.

Service Delivery Forums will soon convene in each of the priority outcome areas and each of these forums will negotiate a Service Delivery Agreement. Not only will the province participate in such Service Delivery Forums and Agreements at national level, but provincial departments will also participate in the forums at provincial level and be expected to conclude a provincial service delivery agreement with the Premier.

It must be evident that we are committed to respond to the President's demand that; "2010 shall be the year of action".

Operation Hlasela

Mr. Speaker Agostinho Neto, the late poet and first President of Angola, once said; "The most important thing is to solve the problems of the people."

Mmuso wa rona o re "Ntho ya bohlokwa ke ho rarabolla mathata a sechaba".

Ons belangrikste taak is om mense se probleme op te los. Niks meer en niks minder nie.

When we took office last year, we launched Operation Hlasela in pursuit of our efforts to solve the problems of our people. We did so precisely because we understood that in solving the problems of our people we must attack poverty, homelessness, crime and all other social ills affecting our people.

In simple terms Operation Hlasela is a strategy, based on the ANC Elections Manifesto, which focuses on mass mobilisation, intervention, collaboration and partnership to fulfil the notion of "working together we can do more."

It is an integrated service delivery model that aims to ensure that various spheres and departments of government work together in planning and implementing projects and programmes.

Ha mmoho re ka kgona ho etsa tse ngata.

Operation Hlasela is about bringing hope to our people. It is about solving our people's problems. In giving practical expression to this notion of solving people's problems we have a testimony from Mme Khantso Elizabeth Maimane from Boiteko Public School. I would like to read her letter to this august House. She says;

“It’s a great pleasure to write this letter. I’m Khantso Elizabeth Maimane; I was working at Ons Anker Intermediate School as a Grade R educator. During Operation Hlasela the Premier visited our school. I raised my hand and asked you to give me a permanent post. You said to me that I’m already permanent because I have sacrificed to work at the farm.

I’m thanking you from the bottom of my heart; the promise was fulfilled. Now I am permanent. I’m very much grateful, because I regard myself as most fortunate today. Thanks so very much. I’m speechless.”

Seno ke nngwe ya dikai tse di bontshang maikemisetso a rona go rarabolola mathata a batho ba rona.

Honourable Speaker, the esteemed member of the Order of Ikhamanga, Mongale Wally Serote writes in the preface of his epic poem, Quiet Footsteps, that;

**“ in broad day light
we will have to examine ourselves
even as we know that some amongst us
will bark at us like mad dogs”**

We have perhaps developed a better understanding of the demands that the new performance-based outcome approach will require as a result of our implementation of various Operation Hlasela injunctions since we took office. The past 7 months have produced both outstanding achievements but also some weaknesses in the implementation of Operation Hlasela.

But we are convinced that with Operation Hlasela, we remain on the right track. In line with the new outcome based approach, let me briefly report back on our progress with the implementation of Operation Hlasela whilst outlining some of the major government programmes for the 2010/2011 financial year.

EDUCATION

Education and skills development form the cornerstone of the priority outcome areas of government. Our unwavering stance on education is reinforced by the Freedom Charter that says; “Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children”.

Honourable Speaker, in our first few months in office, we permanently employed 1069 temporary teachers. We also convened a meeting with 1400 school principals to discuss challenges and possible solutions. In response to some of the challenges, we have eradicated platoon schools by building 15 additional schools in various localities throughout the Province. Twelve of these schools are functional; they are being used for lessons.

Last year I was privileged to attend the opening of the Mehopung Primary school in Ficksburg with the Honourable MEC Makgoe. This school is now accommodating more than 1000 learners who were previously platooning at the adjacent Masaleng Primary School. In line with Operation Hlasela’s principles, 500 community members of the Setsoto municipality benefited through the creation of temporary jobs during the construction of the school.

This year, the year of action – we shall build 3 more new schools, renovate, upgrade and provide more classrooms in various urban and rural areas. We shall also launch a new pilot programme that will see health practitioners such as nurses and social workers being deployed to some schools in the province.

Let me once more, extend my personal congratulations to the principals of the 38 schools who achieved a 100 % success rate during the 2009 matric examination. These principals are here with us today.

Distinguished guests, our engagement with the education sector is not an event but a sustained conversation and course of action aimed at achieving the delivery of quality basic education.

Honourable Speaker, allow me to reiterate our non-negotiables with regard to education: Learners and teachers are expected to be in school, in class, on time, learning and teaching for seven hours a day.

Our children in Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers will be adequately prepared for schooling. In this regard 200 ECD practitioners will be trained and employed during the next financial year.

The revitalisation of hostels in rural areas and the utilization of unoccupied school buildings will further be pursued this year. We have upgraded school hostels and as of the beginning of this year, the number of learners accommodated in hostels has increased substantially to 2229. Six additional hostels will be renovated to accommodate more learners.

Nurses and social workers shall be dedicated to rural hostels and schools. In addition, further consideration shall be given to the provision of housing for teachers in rural areas to enable them to dedicate all their energy and undivided attention to the education of learners in rural areas. The MEC of Education shall elaborate on this during his budget vote.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to commend the educators who continue to make us proud by producing excellent results year after year. The teachers of Free State continued to demonstrate excellence in the 2009 National Teaching Awards.

We won 4 of the 8 awards, a record setting performance as no other province has won 4 awards since the inception of these awards in 2000. These teachers are from Aurora Primary School in Welkom, Letotolo Primary school in Qwa Qwa, Tikwana Comprehensive in Hoopstad and Meloding High School in Virginia.

It is important to note that the Free State provincial government awarded 2300 full-time bursaries to the youth of the Free State this year. Eighty one additional learners have been enrolled to study Social Work through the

national scholarship for Social Workers. Our bursary scheme has benefited both black and white students from the entire province.

I also wish to announce that the Free State provincial government will sponsor three best-performing students in the field of Communications at the University of the Free State to participate in an international study-tour to the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands and the University of Mechelen in Belgium during September this year.

Furthermore, we continue to place a high premium on training by increasing our learnership and internship intake.

HEALTH

We undertook to convene the Provincial Health Summit to bring all stakeholders together to consider the challenges faced by our provincial health system and to develop short and long term strategies aimed at solving these problems. The Health Summit which was convened in July 2009 resolved on a number of issues such as;

- filling of critical vacant posts within our Health Sector,
- improvement of the medical depot functioning,
- increase the supply of nurses;
- re-opening of nursing colleges,
- improving the management of the Department of Health.
- strengthening the management capacity in our hospitals, primary health care centers and clinics.

We have made satisfactory progress in implementing the Summit resolutions. A clear turn-around strategy, aligned with government's 10 point plan on health, has been developed.

Furthermore, we are phasing out the outsourcing of cleaning and security services at Bongani Hospital and we have employed 105 workers

permanently. Once we have phased the current outsourced services at Pelonomi and National Hospitals, we intend to create more permanent jobs.

We must also engage all role-players in a debate on the functioning of the medical depot, specifically the management thereof, Honourable Speaker. We shall ensure that every hospital and clinic has the necessary ICT equipment, including photocopiers and fax machines.

To address the issue of shortage of doctors in the Phumelela are, we will deploy sufficient doctors for our people to have access to better healthcare services.

Two significant immunisation campaigns will unfold in the province during the new financial year. The first of these campaigns will focus on measles, polio and the provision of Vitamin A. The roll-out of this campaign will unfold in two stages during April and May 2010. The campaign will be conducted at schools throughout the Province.

The second campaign will unfold over the next three months and will focus on H1N1 vaccinations of vulnerable groups, (including front-line medical technicians) and children under 15 years of age who are HIV positive. This campaign shall reach all ECD centers, schools, farms and villages.

As part of strengthening the management capacity of hospitals and accelerating service delivery, I am happy to announce that as from first of April, all hospital CEO's will have certain delegated powers to improve their management and financial affairs to become efficient and effective medical institutions.

Ladies and gentlemen, having noted the extensive work and related resources that will be required to upgrade the current National Hospital to a modern high-quality public health care institution, approval and funding have been obtained from the national government for the construction of a new

hospital in Mangaung. This new hospital will therefore replace the current National Hospital.

Furthermore, we will continue with the upgrade of Pelonomi Hospital and the second phase of construction with respect to both the Trompsburg and Ladybrand hospitals. The renovations at the Boitumelo Hospital will be fast-tracked.

We shall build more clinics and increase the number of ambulances, especially for rural areas. The provincial government is currently considering new innovative financing models that will further address our priority requirements in terms of medical facilities and equipment.

As we launched Operation Hlasela in various localities, we also intentionally included visits to some of the clinics and hospitals throughout our province. We also conducted an on-site inspection to the central medical depot and engaged with the employees responsible for the management of our district and provincial hospitals.

Honourable Speaker, the fight against the scourge of HIV and AIDS still remains a priority. We urge each and every person to play an active role to ensure that we contain the spread of this disease. Our government has provided and will continue to provide leadership in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

I appeal to the people of the Free State to talk openly about HIV and AIDS, to stop discriminating against infected people and to take an active part in activities seeking to reduce the HIV and AIDS-related stigma. Furthermore, Honourable Speaker, we shall intensify our “Know Your Status”-campaign that focuses on voluntary counseling and testing.

The President has directed that Premiers must take the leading responsibility for the Provincial AIDS Councils. This will accordingly be implemented in the Province. The Free State Aids Council will therefore forge ahead with

awareness campaigns that will assist to reduce the number of new infections and reducing the impact of HIV and AIDS on individuals, families, communities and society.

In collaboration with Thailand, an extensive HIV and AIDS campaign will be rolled-out in August 2010. Our programmes will also include the targeting of other communicable diseases such as Tuberculosis. We shall train 1000 health care professionals in 2010, to specifically deal with issues relating to TB management.

It is a great honour to announce that all student nurses who completed their studies during 2009 have been employed by the provincial government. The Thaba Nchu Nursing College will re-open on the first of April 2010. This is a further illustration of our commitment to improve our provincial health care services.

A comprehensive review of our current hospital referral system as well as the rendering of emergency medical services has been initiated by the Department of Health. This review is aimed at improving our response rate and consequently the effectiveness and efficiency with which we render health care services in urban and rural areas.

THE CREATION OF DECENT JOBS AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Honourable Speaker, last year we boldly announced that we will create 50 000 jobs between June and December 2009. We were confident that our government, working together with our people, would weather the recession. However, the effects of the economic downturn were harsher than we thought.

Hopefully there are signs that our provincial economy may be recovering slowly but surely from the crisis. The December Index of the Free State Barometer, compiled by Business24 and BoE Private Clients, showed signs of improvement in key sectors like construction and transport.

Economists are carefully optimistic about the growth prospects of the Free State during 2010 but have warned that it can take up to 12 months to reverse the losses of the previous year.

According to the 4th Quarterly Labour Force Survey released by Statistics South Africa earlier this month, 32 000 new jobs were created in the Free State. Furthermore, government, through its Expanded Public Works Programme, created 27 116 employment opportunities. This means that we have effectively surpassed our target of 50 000 jobs.

We must acknowledge the collaboration between all spheres of government, the private and informal sector and all our people for ensuring that we achieve this goal.

Honourable Speaker, the comparisons between the 3rd and the 4th Quarter in 2009 indicate that certain industries succeeded in gaining jobs; Private households increased with 15 000, Mining with 9 000, Manufacturing with 8 000 and Transport with 1 000. These industries were the main contributors to job creation in the Province.

However, it is a matter of concern that we lost 10 000 jobs in the agricultural sector in the province. It will require of us to work collectively with Organized Agriculture, under the banner of Free State Agriculture Union and NAFU, to turn the situation around. Accordingly a number of programmes aimed at improving our performance in the field of Agriculture will be outlined by the MEC for Agriculture during her budget vote speech.

One of the successes of Operation Hlasela has of course been the employment of local people in each locality where we have launched this initiative. The provincial government has created temporary job opportunities for people in Henneman, Jacobsdal, Jagersfontein, Paul Roux, Virginia, Parys, Qwaqwa, Makgolokoeng, Cornellia, Marabastad in Kroonstad and Batho in Bloemfontein.

We have insisted that the employment of these workers must be inclusive of all citizens of our province, black and white. These job opportunities also provide our people with skills development and training, thereby increasing the possibility for them entering the formal job market or becoming self-employed.

Seno ke sesupo sa gore mmuso wa Free State o ikemiseditse go samagama le mathata a aparetseng batho ba rona.

During the next financial year, government will continue to consolidate work that was started last year with the Development Bank of Southern Africa, the Industrial Development Cooperation and other funding agencies in order to raise the much needed funds for the following programmes; the Harrismith Logistics Hub, the N8 corridor development and the office park in Batho. Due to the magnitude of the Harrismith Logistics Hub project, we have decided to relocate it to the Premier's office. This will enable easy co-ordination as this project is cross-cutting through Departments.

In terms of the Xhariep Transfrontier Park, we launched a fish hatchery project in conjunction with the Chinese government. This constitutes an investment of R40 million, and this project will create 100 jobs by the end of this year.

The provincial government, together with the Central University of Technology, recently launched the Regional Innovation Centre that provides for the establishment of Matric Saturday School, and the Human Resources Management training programme for officials of the Department of Education. This initiative will assist to yield greater economic growth at regional level, promote skills development and capacity building and research and product development.

While most of these programmes will take more than a year to yield positive results, we are of the firm view that they will succeed and create much needed sustainable jobs for our people.

The Solar Water heaters project will proceed in April 2010 following the approval we received from the Department of Energy and the Development Bank of Southern Africa. We accommodated a change in the implementation of this programme as the initial phase will now focus on the provision of solar water geysers to the identified public entities such as schools and clinics in the Province. The roll-out to households will constitute the next phase to be implemented this year.

The forthcoming year will also see the provincial government focusing on the creation of green jobs and other initiatives aimed at placing the Free State at the centre of development in our country and the coordinated attack on poverty and the implementation of government's Anti-Poverty strategies.

Honourable Speaker, the potential of the tourism industry in respect of job creation must be unlocked. The provincial government will prioritize the consideration of its participation and support of some of the key tourism attractions in the Province including the annual Air Show in Bethlehem, the Cherry Festival in Ficksburg, the Phakisa-NASCAR-event in Welkom and the Fauresmith International Endurance Ride.

Climate change has a noticeable influence on the lives of the people of the Free State. The effect of climate change on the availability of water is already evident from the water shortages experienced by some of our small towns such as Paul Roux, Edenville, Jagersfontein, Zastron and others are experiencing water shortages.

The provincial government, working together with the Department of Water Affairs, Fishery and Forestry will look for immediate relief for people living in these areas. Water conservation must, however, be a priority for each and every individual living in the Free State and South Africa.

The illegal dumping of medical waste, as exposed in Welkom last year, emphasises the need to dramatically improve the implementation of the

regulatory framework that governs this area. The unscrupulous conduct of individuals obsessed with profit, exposed our people to unacceptable health risks and also caused potential harm to the environment.

We must commend the Green Scorpions for their swift response that led to the arrest of the individuals involved in the illegal dumping of medical waste. The provincial Departments of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs and Health have been directed to develop a comprehensive strategy and implementation plan to deal with the management of medical waste as well as the illegal dumping of such waste. We must ensure that there is no recurrence of such incidents in our province.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD SECURITY AND LAND REFORM

Honourable Speaker, Cde Mark Shope, a veteran of the liberation struggle in our country, used to say; “We are fighting for a South Africa where every child shall have a pint of milk a day”. We therefore need to reiterate our intention to restore the Free State to its former glory of being the bread basket of South Africa.

Accordingly, we need to ensure that our agricultural sector produces enough food to feed our people and for export purposes. We acknowledge that for us to achieve this objective we need to engage commercial farmers whose expertise would assist our emerging farmers. About ten commercial farmers will be identified to mentor emerging farmers who are proving to be progressing well. Through this process we want to fast-track agro-processing and value-adding.

Notwithstanding the successes of some of our provincial farmers, we are well aware that farmers still face challenges including access to finance to establish viable farming enterprises, high prices to acquire land and requisite machinery and implements, access to markets as well as poor farm and road infrastructure. Our farmers must be able to increase their

profits, broaden the local export base and create additional employment opportunities.

In the 2010/2011 financial year we shall give support to both emerging black farmers as well as established white commercial farmers. In partnership with other relevant stakeholders such as farmers, we will upgrade rural infrastructure and roads. We will also continue to prioritise the security of farm owners and farm workers.

Ons gaan ook vier landbou skole vestig, want ons dink dit is belangrik om reeds op skoolvlak jongmense te betrek by landbou. Dit sal verseker dat studente 'n beter begrip het vir die studierigting op tersiêre vlak. Die landbouskole wat ons sal vestig, is Nampo, Seotlong, Boovel en Weiveld.

The reintroduction of agricultural education in our schools will be receiving the necessary attention. Our intention is to increase the number of these schools in the province to elevate our status as the agricultural hub of South Africa.

PLANNING AND HUMAN SETTLEMENT

One of the key challenges of government is to deal with the distorted spatial planning legacy brought about by apartheid. As a result of that planning our people live far from areas of economic activity, little or no access to land for housing and limited access to basic municipal services.

Accordingly, our approach to human settlement seeks to change this. Our emphasis on building human settlements means an integrated, coordinated and holistic approach which sees people living in places near to employment opportunities.

In an attempt to reverse the legacy of underdevelopment in our rural areas, we have already started developing human settlements in areas like Marabastad, Diyatalawa and Makgolokweng. Our intention is to address all the needs related to education, health, social services and recreation.

This year we will take our plans a step further and place more emphasis on the establishment of new towns and sustainable human settlements linked to economic activities. We will focus on Mangaung, Botshabelo, Thaba Nchu, Qwaqwa, Odendaalsrus, Intabazwe (Harrismith), Kroonstad, Virginia and various other localities. The towns of the Xhariep district will remain our focus areas. We intend to destroy “G hostel” and “Silver City” hostel in Welkom and Bloemfontein respectively to replace them with proper human settlements.

THE FIGHT AGAINST CRIME AND CORRUPTION

The fight against crime remains our top priority. We must drastically reduce the levels of crime to ensure that our people are and feel safe. Accordingly, we have set ourselves targets of reducing contact crimes by 10% during the next financial year. This will require increased cooperation and collaboration with the South African Police Service.

Retla tswela pele ka mano a rona a ho Hlasela bonokoane le tlolo ya molao.

We will have to mobilise our communities in an all-round offensive against crime. During the course of this year, we shall emphatically place the communities at the centre of crime fighting.

Our efforts to fight crime will extend to securing state properties and buildings. We shall embark on an audit of private security companies and conduct vetting procedures to ensure the safety of all concerned. Where necessary, we shall use our own security officials to guard state buildings.

The provincial government is looking at the possibility of absorbing the police reservists as security officials on a permanent basis to strengthen our capacity in this critical area. We also intend to destroy dilapidated and unused government and other private buildings which are used by criminals.

Honourable Speaker, one of the critical issues facing our society is liquor and substance abuse, especially by our young people. In Xhariep, we are concerned about the continued production of the “pap-sak” and the extent to which it is consumed. We will establish an interdepartmental team composed of various government departments to look at the enforcement of liquor legislation. We must ensure that the production of the “pap-sack” is completely rooted out in this province.

The rooting out of corruption at provincial and local government remains a priority. We have initiated a review process of our management of corruption cases referred to the Free State through the National Anti-Corruption Hotline as we recognized that cases are not promptly closed out on the system. We will be reconstituting the Provincial Anti-Corruption Forum and the Anti-Corruption Unit will be established and coordinated from the Premier’s Office.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

The provincial government is committed to ensuring that it meets its responsibilities and obligations in terms of the Local Government Turn-Around -Strategy and Ten Point Plan. In this regard the performance of local government throughout the Province will be strengthened.

We have identified a number of issues that have to be effectively addressed in order to bring about a meaningful change in the lives of our people. These include;

- Improving the quantity and quality of municipal basic services
- Ensuring the development and adoption of reliable and credible Integrated Development Plans
- Building and strengthening the administrative, institutional and financial capabilities of municipalities
- Developing and strengthening a politically and administratively stable system of municipalities
- Accelerating delivery of housing opportunities
- Efficient land utilization

Furthermore, the provincial government will continue to strengthen local government through financial assistance and other capacity building initiatives. This will include the financing of critical staff in low capacity municipalities.

Our efforts in ensuring Municipal Clean Audits will continue this year. To date, we have completed the audit in all municipalities within the Xhariep District and provided support to treasuries at these municipalities where deficiencies were identified.

Accelerated infrastructure provision to our people in municipalities is key in order to ensure the success of our township revitalisation programmes. Accordingly, provincial government working closely with the DBSA will assist municipalities that have not been able to spend their Municipal Infrastructure Grant in full. This support will include capacity building, deployment of technical personnel and prudent financial management.

Deputy Speaker, during this year, government will continue with the programmes started last year aimed at the revitalisation of our townships. In 2010, we will extend our Operation Hlasela programme to 22 other localities in all five districts of the Free State Province. We remain committed to the prioritization of the Xhariep district as well as the elevation of Botshabelo, Thaba Nchu, Harrismith and Qwaqwa amongst our development priorities.

The Presidential Hotline has provided a platform for our people to bring to our attention service delivery problems. The nature of complaints are not only limited to issues pertaining to provincial government but also relate to services offered by national departments.

In order to strengthen our response capacity we have established a formidable team comprising of officials from all spheres of government to deal with these complaints effectively. Furthermore, we will be consolidating

existing hotlines in the province to ensure that we have only one hotline located within the Premier's Office.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Honourable Speaker, much have been said and let there be no doubt that the provincial government is well aware of the state of roads in the Free State. The heavy rains over the last six months have contributed to the deterioration of the current road conditions. We have engaged extensively with this matter over the past few months.

I must indicate that the provincial government will require about 15 billion rand, in order to upgrade our roads whilst also maintaining other roads. This will therefore require creative and extra-ordinary means to address the situation. To this end, government has established a joint technical team with the private sector to raise the required funds and rebuild our road infrastructure as a matter of urgency. We are also considering various other funding options and models to raise the capital investment required to address this situation.

As part of the roads upgrade programme, the road between Bultfontein and Dealesville as well as the road between Bultfontein and Boshof will be attended to in the forthcoming financial year. Government will ensure that the weigh bridge at the R70 road is upgraded and fully functional by the end of the financial year.

Road safety awareness programmes will be elevated and sustained throughout the year. This cannot be a priority that only finds its way into the public conscience during Easter and Christmas holidays. We must ensure that we raise a generation of responsible road users and our road safety programmes will therefore also be introduced in schools.

Distinguished guests, a lot of ground has been covered with respect to the rail revitalisation between Bloemfontein and Thaba-Nchu. We will be working very

closely with the Public Rail Agency of South Africa to ensure that the train between Thaba-Nchu and Bloemfontein is operational as soon as possible, after necessary consultations have been done.

The project was delayed due to the court case instituted by some of the affected parties which we successfully defended, thus protecting the interests of the commuters. The rail will go a long way in ensuring quality and safer public transport for our people. The provincial government has also considered safer environments for public transport users in the form of upgrading the taxi ranks. We will during this financial year implement the new greening concept for taxi ranks.

In order to create economic growth, government will continue to invest more resources in infrastructure development during the next financial year. In this regard an amount of R2 billion will be spent on the building and maintenance of schools, clinics, hospitals, government building, sports facilities, libraries and museums.

Given the financial constraints engendered by the negative global economic environment, government simply does not have adequate funding to address the huge infrastructure backlogs. However, since this administration moves from the premise that “the most important thing is to solve the problems of the people”, we have through our treasury initiated discussions with the National Government departments to allow us to engage the private sector to raise finance to build and maintain social infrastructure and government offices.

NATION BUILDING AND SOCIAL COHESION

Honourable Speaker and Deputy Speaker, South Africa will also take centre stage in hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The road to 2010 has been long, starting with the heart break of losing the 2006 World Cup bid to the elated celebrations when the 2010 winning bid was announced. Finally, Africa and South Africa, will take its rightful place to stage the world’s biggest sporting event.

We are confident that South Africa will stage the tournament with dignity and determination. We will continue to say “South Africa and Africa, Ke Nako!” We will illustrate that we are a country and a continent that is alive with possibility, whilst making the tournament the most memorable that generations to come will remember with pride and nostalgia.

Mr. Speaker, the countdown has begun. I must express my appreciation to you and the Legislature for allowing us to relax the dress code today in celebration of the Football Friday campaign. We call on all people of the Free State to join this campaign and show their support by wearing their Bafana Bafana jerseys on Fridays.

The campaign does not only intend to build excitement for the tournament and to express our support for Bafana Bafana, but to show patriotism when thousands of visitors descend to our Province. During the Confederations Cup, our visitors were puzzled, intrigued and entertained by our people and particularly the SIWELELE supporters

Undoubtedly Free State and Mangaung are ready to host the countries of Mexico, Japan, Cameroon, Nigeria, Greece, Slovakia, Paraguay, France, Switzerland, Honduras and of course our own team, Bafana Bafana, during the group matches that will be played in the host city of Mangaung.

Motsamaisi wa di puisano, tlo re bontshe baeti ba rona hore re tla ijarela Afrika Borwa ya rona ka mahetla a rona. Re tla tswela pele ho apara dikipa tsa rona tsa Bafana, ka-Labohlano le leng le leng. Re tshepa hore sechaba sa rona setla amohela kgoeletso ya Mookamedi wa rona Ntate Jacob Zuma ya hore ma-Afrika Borwa a reke ditekete tsa bolo, aye dipapading tsena, a tshehetse sehlopa sa naha Bafana Bafana.

On 11 June we will paint the whole Free State province gold and green in Bafana’s colours.

Hlasela ka bolo, Bafana Bafana, Hlasela.

Honourable Speaker, our participation and achievement in sport and recreation are inherently linked to promote nation building and social cohesion. These areas are able to bridge their cultural and ethnic divides between people and inculcate a sense of belonging. It brings people together; it promotes inclusion and participation of people from various walks of life.

We will heighten the level of participation by community members by introducing activities such as school sport programmes to also raise our health levels and as a means of keeping young people away from crime and drugs. We have launched Operation Hlasela Ka Bolo where 32 schools from across the province are competing against each as part of promoting schools sports while at the same time promoting the 2010 Soccer world Cup in our province.

People who cannot be at the stadium will have an opportunity to watch the matches at the public viewing areas that will be staged in various community halls throughout the province. To reiterate what President Zuma said in his State of the Nation Address, let us all stand behind the national team Bafana-Bafana. We bear testimony to the great performance they put up during the 2009 Confederation Cup. I strongly believe that with our unquestionable support, they can make us proud.

Mr. Speaker, it is also important for us to recognise and celebrate outstanding achievements by our sports men and women during 2009. Last year we joined forces with the private sector in supporting Tumelo Pedi in competing at international level in power lifting. He returned from India in December as the Commonwealth champion in his weight category.

Mizan Viljoen also won a gold medal in the Youth E category during the 11th Biathlon World Championships held in Monaco. We also salute the achievements of Juan Smith and Heinrich Brussow for receiving gold medals during the Tri-Nations rugby series. All in all 54 of our athletes received gold,

silver and bronze medals in various sporting activities that include karate, rugby, soccer, modern pentathlon, cricket, table tennis etc.

The Free State province and its people must promote and celebrate our heritage and culture. The provincial government will continue to facilitate the creation of appropriate opportunities such as MACUFE to achieve this objective.

Honourable Speaker, we are aware that we have not paid sufficient attention to the cultural sector in our Province and we will therefore convene a broad summit with stakeholders and role-players in this sector during the forthcoming year.

YOUTH

Honourable Speaker, we are cognisant of the fact that the future of our country and our people is dependent on the youth. In line with the President's assertion on youth development, we will continue to maintain youth matters as being core to the advance of our province.

We shall continue to work with the National Youth Development Agency in promoting youth economic participation, youth information service programmes and a national youth service. As the Free State Youth Commission Act was repealed last year, the Youth Affairs Management Directorate has been established in the Premier's Office to ensure that the provincial focus on youth is sustained. Government departments will ensure that this priority is maintained in their respective programmes and projects.

We call on our youth to develop an understanding of the fact that South Africa belongs to all of them. A formation of youth, black and white, must be at the centre of service delivery activities as workers, entrepreneurs and professionals.

GENDER

Honourable Speaker, after 15 years of democracy and our stated priority of addressing gender equity, we need to conduct an assessment of gender mainstreaming within the provincial government as well as at local and district municipalities. In addition, we need to reflect on the progress that we have made with regard to the economic empowerment of women in this province. This is a project that will be led by the Office of the Premier during the forthcoming year.

Furthermore, government will continue to prioritise programmes aimed at protecting women and children who are in abusive relationships. The campaign to fight against women and child abuse as part of the 16 Days of Activism of No Violence Against Women and Children shall be stepped up.

Special focus will also be paid to human trafficking which has increasingly gained prominence in our province. We have noted an increase in incidents of young girls taken from their homes, promised jobs, but end up involved in prostitution and drug abuse. We recently intervened and removed 11 young women that had been caught up in a trafficking ring.

Seven of these young women have been awarded bursaries to pursue studies at FET Colleges and four have been referred to rehabilitation centers. Government, working together with law enforcement agencies, will work harder to root out human trafficking in this Province.

DISABILITY

We should all be aware that South Africans with disabilities are protected by the Bill of Rights in our Constitution. The Bill of Rights finds expression in the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act of 1999 prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability. The 1997 White Paper on the Integrated National Disability Strategy adopted a social human rights and development approach to disability.

Honourable Speaker, we must strive to improve and enhance our implementation of the relevant legislative and policy framework. The provincial government must take the lead in calling on all sectors of our society to become actively involved in de-stigmatising disability which often leads to stereotyping and myths. In addition, government must review and adopt its communication methods as there is a tendency to communicate through the use of language that many cannot understand.

Most children with disabilities live in extreme poverty and have poor access to appropriate educational opportunities. The Department of Education plans to renovate and upgrade 13 public special schools in the new financial year. My Office has also initiated an audit of the state of facilities and needs of all public special schools in the Free State. This initiative is aimed at addressing more than just the physical infrastructure needs of such schools.

We will also evaluate whether we have made sufficient progress in ensuring compliance in terms of public buildings with prescribed norms and standards regarding access for disabled people.

In addition, the conscious recruitment of people with disabilities in the public service will continue and we will engage with the private sector to actively promote this programme.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Inspired by the wise words of that outstanding son of Cuba, a revolutionary, and a national hero, Jose Marti that: "Not only are we Cuban(s), but part of humanity, and we fight for the honor and well-being of all of Humankind".

The Free State government will continue to strengthen its relationship with the revolutionaries of Cuba during the next financial year. We continue to benefit from the expertise of Cuban engineers and doctors. To them we say, long live the spirit of international solidarity, long live! Aluta Continua!

Furthermore, the Free State government will continue engaging various countries to look at investment opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Honourable Speaker, this year marks the 55th Anniversary of the adoption of the Freedom Charter in Kliptown by people united not by colour, but by cause. We remain committed to the Freedom Charter which embodies the hopes and aspirations of the people of South Africa, black and white.

The year 2010 is also the 50th Anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre on 21 March, when innocent civilians were butchered in broad daylight by the apartheid regime, thus closing all forms of peaceful resistance in our country. It was also during that year 1960 that the ANC and other political organisations were banned.

We therefore have an obligation to continue to honour our heroes and heroines who lost their lives in pursuit of freedom and democracy and we have a responsibility to defend the democratic gains of our people.

The year 2010 also marks the 30th Anniversary of the 1980 school boycotts in Mangaung and the brutal, barbaric murder of two students, Daniel Papi Makotoko and Thulo Jeremiah Sejake. Once more, we lower our revolutionary banners in honour of these outstanding sons of our revolution whose blood watered the tree of liberty.

To those and many more who lost their lives in active service during the difficult, painful years of our struggle we say “your death was not in vain”. Everlasting glory to all heroes and heroines of people whose mortal remains lies buried across the length and breadth of our country, the continent and the world.

Honourable Speaker, we also bow our heads in honour of Teboho “Shoes” Sikisi and Mandla Mdali, who departed in November last year. They join a list

of patriots in the province and nationally whom we shall fondly remember for their tireless efforts to bring the system of apartheid down to its knees and build a society that is truly non-racial, non-sexist and free and democratic.

Ladies and gentlemen let me once more call on all our people in the Free State to welcome our guests with open arms, warm hearts and provide them with the best hospitality ever. We owe this to OR Tambo whom we continue to honour through our international relations; thus we have the “Order of the Companionship of Oliver Reginald Tambo” as the highest honour that our country can bestow to a foreign citizen.

This is “The Year of Working Together” to speed up effective service delivery to the people.

Dit is die “Jaar van Saamwerk” om effektiewe dienslewering te bespoedig”.

The Executive Council took a decision to join the President and the Country in declaring this year the “Year of working together to speed up effective service delivery to our people”.

Accordingly, this means that Operation Hlasela will be taken to the next gear, where speed and urgency will be the order of the day. During 2009 we laid the foundation for Operation Hlasela and promoted an understanding of our new ways of working. 2010 is the year of Action, Action and more Action. Only through conscious, deliberate actions will we solve the problems of our people.

President Zuma said to Parliament; “The worth of good ideas and good policies reside in their implementation and the impact they make on people’s lives.” Let us take these words to heart and give practical effect to our strategies and plans.

Working together we can and will do more to build a better Free State.

Re tla hlasela ka matla, ka pele, ka lebello le ka boiphihlelo.

I thank you; **Ke a leboha; Ndiyabulela, Ngiyabonga.**

Baie dankie! Haak Vrystaat!

Amandla Ngawethu,

Matla ke a rona