

**STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS BY MR. E.S. MAGASHULE,
PREMIER OF THE FREE STATE PROVINCE ON 04 MARCH 2011,
UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE, VISTA CAMPUS: BLOEMFONTEIN**

**Honourable Speaker & Deputy Speaker of the Free State Legislature
Honourable Premiers of other Provinces
Honourable Judge President
Honourable Ambassadors and Consul-Generals
Honourable Members of the Executive Council
Honourable Judges of the High Courts
Honourable Members of the Legislature
Honourable Members of the National Assembly and the NCOP
Leaders of the African National Congress and the Alliance
Executive Mayors, Mayors and Councillors
Director General of the Free State, Heads of Departments and government officials
Provincial Commissioners of the SAPS and Correctional Services
Command Officer of the Army Support Base, Bloemfontein Brigadier General Moadira
Distinguished members of our House of Traditional Leaders
Veterans and stalwarts of our struggle
Members of the Media
Baahi ba Freisitata,
Baahi ba Afrika Borwa
Comrades and friends
Viewers and listeners at home**

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to have this opportunity to deliver my third State of the Province Address to the Free State Legislature. Allow me on this occasion of the Official Opening of the Legislature, to wish all the Honourable Members a prosperous and productive year.

I want to thank everybody present today for taking time off to honour this occasion with your presence as we report on our achievements during the financial year 2010/2011, and outline our plans for the year 2011/2012.

I wish to take this opportunity to welcome and acknowledge our traditional leadership and the leadership of different faith-based and community organisations.

I also wish to acknowledge the presence amongst us of the Matlabe Family of Botshabelo, Sienna Dike of Koffiefontein, Mr. Thembane Thamela and Mme Lofafa, my teacher from childhood days.

MILESTONES IN 2011

Umkhonto We Sizwe

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the presence of many of our military veterans as we mark the 50th anniversary of our glorious People's Army, Umkhonto We Sizwe. From its humble beginnings in 1961, MK grew from strength to strength into an army that delivered devastating blows to the enemy, and contributed immensely towards the creation of a free, non-racial and democratic South Africa.

MK was the military wing of the ANC, whose founding Commander-in-Chief, Nelson Mandela, spent twenty-seven years in prison. At the time, Mandela declared; "There comes a time in the life of any nation to submit or fight. We decide to fight."

It is therefore, proper that we not only celebrate the 50th anniversary of MK, but we also remember the men and women who lost their lives on the battlefield. We remember those MK combatants who were maimed by the apartheid regime 30 years ago during the Matola raid in Mozambique, the Maseru Massacre in 1982 and the murderous incursions by the former South African Defence Force into Botswana, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Zambia before 1981.

We will continue to honour them and many others like Basil February, Solomon Mahlangu, Barney Molokoane, Andrew Zondo and Zuka Baloyi, Boiki "Shingler" Madikgetla, Kentridge "Khanyile" Moloisane and Moholo, as special diamonds who will continue to shine in our land.

This year will also mark the 51st commemoration of the Sharpeville Massacre, which took place on 21st March 1960. We will commemorate this historic event on Sunday 20th March 2011, at

the Free State Stadium during a mass prayer service with the Zion Christian Church and other denominations.

Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union

The Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) will also celebrate its 21st Anniversary this year. The Free State Province and the City of Mangaung will host the POPCRU Annual Congress in June. It is no coincidence that POPCRU chose to convene its annual congress in Mangaung this year. It forms part of the build-up to the ANC's Centenary Celebrations that will mark the 2012 calendar year.

ANC Centenary Celebrations

Honourable Speaker, on behalf of the people of Free State, I want to join all South Africans and the people of the world in conveying our good wishes to our iconic former President, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. We will continue to honour Mandela Day as we did last year in Steynsrus.

We believe that it will be a momentous occasion for Madiba to witness the Centenary of our glorious liberation movement, the African National Congress, in 2012.

After the successful 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup, the Centenary will be the next biggest African celebration of all time. The Free State, as the birthplace of this oldest liberation movement on the continent, is proud and privileged to have been allocated January and December 2012 to host the Centenary programme. This means that the annual January 8 Statement, as well as the national ANC Conference will take place in the Free State next year.

Honourable Speaker, the Centenary Legacy Project and celebrations will never be reduced to a mere project that belongs to the African National Congress only. We have been inundated with calls from the private and academic sectors, to ensure that the people of the Free State and South Africa participate in the Centenary celebrations. We will seize this opportunity to make significant strides in the celebration of the legacy of those who since 1912, led the way to the united, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa that we live in today.

As part of the build-up to the 2012 Centenary Celebrations, we will honour Comrade Winnie Madikizela-Mandela who has inspired the people of the Free State and South Africa during the darkest days of apartheid. We must take inspiration from her fighting spirit to agitate for accelerated service delivery. We will honour our mother, veteran and leader through continuing the creation of the Winnie Mandela Museum in Brandfort, as well as the revitalization of the town.

The founding venue of the ANC is the Wesleyan Church in Waaihoek, Bloemfontein. This iconic landmark will join the ranks of those respected and admired cultural symbols such as the statues of Gen. CR de Wet and the Women's Memorial, which are also found in Bloemfontein. The Free State Provincial Government has submitted the required applications to declare both the Wesleyan Church and Maphikela House as national heritage sites. These iconic sites must be brought into the broader provincial and national heritage of our province and country. This is truly an opportunity to bring together the history of our peoples.

Honourable Speaker, the provincial government will undertake a number of Centenary Legacy Projects. We are pleased to announce that one of these legacy projects will be a R30 million investment in the first phase of the major renovation of the Seisa Ramabodu Stadium in Rocklands, Mangaung.

Re tla aga distadiamo tsa maemo a hodimo – hela jalo sani.

The stadium will be transformed into a multi-purpose facility with proper hospitality and conference facilities, a gymnasium, offices and security features. When the Centenary celebrations conclude, we must have achieved a visible and concrete legacy that appropriately signifies the momentous symbolism of 1912.

Operation Hlasela Philosophy

Honourable Speaker, shortly after we took office in 2009, Operation Hlasela was launched to improve and fast-track service delivery. Let me emphasize: ***Operation Hlasela is not a stand-alone project that requires additional and separate funding by the provincial government.***

Operation Hlasela brings together the resources of all spheres of government - national, provincial and local – in a focused manner in order to bring about real and concrete change in the lives and localities of our people. This has significantly changed the way government works.

Not only do we plan together as provincial and local governments with our public entities, but we also integrate the projects and programmes to be implemented by national departments and state-owned enterprises in the Free State. We are effectively countering the silo-mentality that characterized the way government has worked in the past.

His Excellency, President Zuma, told the Joint Sitting of the National Assembly last year that, *“The defining feature of this administration will be that it knows where people live, understands their needs, and responds faster.”*

Through Operation Hlasela, we have improved our ability to interact with our communities. We are constantly on the ground to give our people the opportunity to directly participate in and influence service delivery. One of the best examples of our partnership with communities is a testimony of Ms Siena Dike:

“I’d like to express my appreciation to the present government of South Africa for the difference it has made in my life. This is in reference to the launch of War on Poverty in 2008 and subsequent Operation Hlasela 2009. The ANC government had identified my family in my area to be part of the “Poverty Programme” in Jacobsdal.

My eldest son runs an employment contract project empowered by The Department of Water Affairs (Working for Water). This initiative was taken by the former Deputy President, Me Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka. In this project my family was uplifted from desperation to victory and has a sense of hope. For that, I am grateful.

My second born son is now studying after he received a scholarship to realize his dreams. I received a disability grant since I had been a widow for more than 8 years. I later became employed through Operation Hlasela in 2009 where I worked in a Public Works project.

I never had a house of my own. Through the RDP housing project, I’m overwhelmed now to boast that my government saw to it that I can be a proud owner of a new dream house of my

own. My grant has lapsed a time ago, but I still feel positive though I hadn't renewed it. My feeling is that my family can still be sustained with the little income we get from the projects launched by the Premier of the Free State.

With all of the positive things mentioned, I continue volunteering at the Home Affairs services in my home-town. I feel that this is a sense of patriotism. I totally love helping my fellow citizens and seeing them having their rights of identity and dignity lived out. Through this, I also plough back in my community and would like to set an example to other fellow South Africans.

This is our government, together we can do more.”

Operation Hlasela has also offered us the opportunity to lobby the private sector to partner with us to bring about real, concrete change in the lives of our people. Working together with the private sector we have launched a programme with the Netcare Group, which operates the largest private hospital network in South Africa. We will jointly implement a nursing training programme aimed at alleviating the shortage of available human resources in this critical occupation.

Honourable Speaker, contrary to criticism: Operation Hlasela is the concrete manifestation that this ANC-led government is truly a caring government which responds faster to the needs of the poor and the vulnerable in our society.

OUTCOME PRIORITIES

Honourable Speaker, we remain committed to five main priorities, namely Education, Health, Rural development and Land Reform, Creating Decent Work and Fighting Crime. We continue to work to improve the effectiveness of local government, infrastructure development and human settlements.

I take this opportunity to account to this Honourable House and the people of the Province on our achievements and some of the challenges we have faced since the 2010 State of the Province Address. Moreover, on behalf of the Provincial Government, I wish to place before this House our main projects and programmes for the forthcoming year.

ON EDUCATION

Education is this government's main priority. Let me briefly reflect on some of our major achievements:

- In the first year of taking office we employed 1069 temporary teachers on a full-time basis;
- The construction of 13 state-of-the-art schools has been completed and platoon schools in the Free State have been eradicated;
- Hostel accommodation for learners living on farms and surrounding localities has been improved;
- The Department of Education is currently providing food to just over four hundred and forty four thousand learners (444 042) in one thousand two hundred and seventy four (1274) schools as part of the National School Nutrition programme;
- In the first phase of the establishment of women cooperatives to render the school nutrition programme in schools, 27 Local Women Cooperatives are now functional in 48 schools and are providing employment to 255 women. There are currently 2 780 food handlers at schools providing meals. These food handlers receive a monthly stipend.
- To date 103 Local Women Co-operatives have been registered with a total number of 800 members. The second phase of implementation of this programme will continue during the course of the year.
- We have become the leading province in investing in our youth through our Provincial Bursary Scheme. A total of 4 432 learners have received full-time bursaries to pursue their studies in scarce skills areas such as Engineering, Finance, Accounting, Medicine, Mathematics and Science.
- Two hundred and fifty eight (258) of these learners are orphans. The beneficiaries of these bursaries all fully representative of all race and gender groups, including the people with disability from all districts across the Province.
- In 2010, we spent a record amount of R154 million on bursaries and will maintain this investment. We will undoubtedly derive the long-term benefit from this initiative.
- Over 400 bursary holders received their degrees and diplomas at the end of the 2010 academic year. Aligned with the 5 plus 2 priorities, the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP) and the New Growth PATH, the number of students who pursued studies in identified areas included;
 - 673 in Education
 - 238 in Engineering

- 230 in Accounting
 - 220 in Medicine and other health professions
- The province adopted a multi-pronged approach to skills development and training and implemented Learnerships, Internships, Skills Programs, Experiential Learning and Adult Basic Education and Training. Our achievements in this regard include the following:
 - 374 graduates were employed as interns in government departments
 - 1495 youth were enrolled in End-user Computing Learnership
 - 2120 Operation Hlasela and general workers in municipalities underwent Skills development training.
 - Of these, 501 from Batho location, Jacobsdal, Jagersfontein, Henneman and Parys, will be given an opportunity to pursue a full qualification in the Further Education and Training Certificate: Plumbing (with emphasis on solar heating) as well as the National Certificate: Building and Civil Construction.
 - This year, we continue our investment in deserving students. A further 1 334 bursaries have been awarded. This increases the total amount spent to R 288 million. The 1 334 learners awarded bursaries this year continue to represent all districts of the Province.
 - In addition to the provincial government allocation, some students are funded through the Operation Hlasela fund. I recently received a letter of appreciation from one of the recipients, Mr. Thembane Thabela, who has completed his studies. He wrote;

"I am a 44-year old male, a resident of Bloemfontein, Free State. In 2000, I pursued by studies in B.Com (Public Administration and Economics) and dropped out because of financial exclusions with only Accounting 1 left to complete my studies. Because of family problems, I had to take charge to seek employment through business enterprises that I registered so as to help my two siblings and parents.

Because of the passion I had for education and the trust I had in the Free State government, the Premier's Office in particular, I was offered a bursary through the Operation Hlasela Fund in 2010. The same year I enrolled with the University of the Free State (School of Management) and graduated in November 2010. I currently hold an MDP – Management Development

Programme (Financial, Project and Risk Management) which I believe will be useful for me to plough back to the community and the Free State government since I have a commitment to service in this province.

Operation Hlasela have come in handy for the majority of the Free State people and have indeed changed their lives from a point “A” to a better “point B”.

I wholeheartedly appreciate and am thankful to the Free State government and the Office of the Premier for revitalizing my life and have hope, like all other people of the province do, that the skills, competencies and studies that I have acquired will assist me to secure employment so that I also can add value to my organization.

OPERATION HLA SELA E YA SEBETSA AND THE FREE STATE ROCKS – AMANDLA!

Honourable Members we confirm President Zuma’s statement, namely: “All teachers to be at schools, in class on time and teaching for at least 7 hours a day.” This objective will not be compromised. Some of the major features of our programmes in the education sector in 2011 are:

- Increasing the number of textbooks provided to learners. Our educators and learners must work together to ensure that the lifespan of textbooks are maximized.
- The renovation of old schools, building additional classrooms in over-crowded schools, and replacing pre-fabricated schools with bricks and mortar.
- Building additional accommodation in identified schools in rural areas, including the Bainsvlei Combined School in Mangaung, to accommodate 300 learners. Our medium-term planning for the 2012/2013 period includes the construction of learner accommodation in Ventersburg to accommodate more learners from rural areas.
- Improvement of learner transport, especially for rural schools. The provincial government intends to buy eight more buses to be used to transport learners to and from schools.

- To enhance the quality of education, the provincial government will also focus on the learning areas of Mathematics and Science. These learning areas will be further improved with the introduction of Mathematics laboratories in primary schools.
- The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools is a continuous project. It must ultimately result in ICT literacy and school connectivity.
- This year 25 schools, including the Manthatisi Secondary School in Qwaqwa, will be connected through the Universal Services Agency South Africa (USSASA).
- In response to the plight of schoolgirls from impoverished families, we will distribute sanitary towels to schools as from April this year. Our appreciation goes to Pick-'n-Pay for the donation of 500 thousand and to Netcare for the donation of one million sanitary towels. This initiative eliminates the possibility of schoolgirls missing school as a result of a lack of this necessity.

HEALTH

Honourable Speaker, our health care sector was functioning at less than optimal levels in 2009. At that time, there was a critical shortage of medicine in hospitals and clinics and continuous challenges with the availability of ambulances. As the Executive Council, we were stunned at the state of operations at our medical depot when we conducted the on-site visit at the time. We realized that we had a mountain to climb to turn-around the status of health in the public sector in the Free State.

Let me assure you Honourable Members that the tide has turned. We are continuing to improve the delivery of quality services to our people. We are definitely on the right road to deliver quality health services to our people and thereby achieving our identified outcome of a **“long and healthy life for all South Africans.”**

During the past year, we focused our attention on an extensive recruitment drive and employment of appropriately qualified and competent professionals in top and senior management positions throughout the Department of Health to ensure that the right people were employed.

Consequently, we employed a qualified medical doctor as Head of the Department to provide strategic leadership and management on health within the Province and a qualified Chartered Accountant as Chief Financial Officer. The health care service and its management will be supported by the recently appointed hospital Chief Executive Officers and hospital boards.

We have succeeded in recruiting highly qualified and registered professional engineers, who will start within the coming weeks to deal with all health infrastructure projects planned for the next financial year. We are confident that this team of professionals will meet our demands of quality services to be delivered by the Department, our hospitals and clinics throughout the Province.

The challenge of chronic non-availability of medicine at our hospitals, clinics, and the medical depot has been resolved. We do receive reports from time to time that some medication is not available, but consistently we find that in these instances, this is largely attributed to depleted stock levels from suppliers. We are adamant in our quest to find a lasting resolution to this challenge.

During the past year, we embarked on many campaigns such as testing for HIV and AIDS, cataract removals and clean hospitals. We want to extend our appreciation to the 376 000 Free Staters who participated in the HIV and AIDS Testing Campaign. We appeal to the people of the Province to use every opportunity they have, to determine their status. Knowing your status is truly empowering.

We have followed a phased approach towards implementing the in-sourcing of services that are currently outsourced by government. In this regard, we have employed 248 cleaners, 119 patient assistants, 302 security officers and gardeners in permanent positions at various health institutions. This obviously contributes to our efforts in creating decent jobs and sustainable livelihoods.

We are making good progress with the upgrade of Pelonomi Hospital. The second phase of the infrastructure development of the Trompsburg and Ladybrand hospitals is continuing. Recently some disruptions and delays were experienced as a result of the floods.

Primary health care remains the key priority in the health care and service sector. The provision of quality health care for our people, especially the poor, will continue to be a high priority during

the year. We will continue to pay special attention to care for children, women, Tuberculosis (TB) sufferers, and people with chronic diseases. Some of our major programmes on health care this year will include:

- Preventing the spread of HIV and AIDS and caring for those infected and affected by the epidemic. Our efforts to reduce mother to child transmission of HIV and AIDS will continue. In combating HIV and AIDS and decreasing the burden of diseases from TB, we shall establish a new Multi Drug Resistant TB Unit in Kopano, Welkom.
- As part of our efforts to decrease maternal and child mortality, we will provide vaccines to prevent infant and child mortality. In addition, a new unit with the necessary specialists will be established at Universitas Hospital as part of measures to reduce maternal and infant mortality.
- In rural areas we will launch a campaign encouraging women to test for breast cancer. The Netcare Group has made available a mobile breast cancer screening unit that will ensure we reach women in the remote, rural areas of the Free State.
- The MEC responsible for Health will embark on special campaigns that focus on Cataract Removal and Male Medical Circumcision at our health facilities.
- We will focus on improving and expanding the existing health infrastructure by building four new clinics in Villiers, Viljoenskroon, Memel and Makhalaneng in Qwaqwa. Working with private sector partners, we will also renovate 20 clinics.
- The filling of 1769 vacancies will be prioritized to deal with the immense challenges we face in the health sector. The recent Provincial Nursing Summit recommended the establishment of a Nursing Directorate within the department, which will bring the Department in line with similar arrangements in other provinces. We will continue to embark on the phasing-out of contract workers and volunteers by creating decent work for our people through formal employment.

- We also want to assure you that the security situation in our hospitals and clinics are receiving the Department's attention, as the provision of a safe and secure working environment for our medical personnel may not be compromised.

CREATING DECENT WORK

During 2010, our Province created 38 467 job opportunities through 1384 community-based programmes. We also implemented the following initiatives:

- 374 unemployed graduates are participating in the Provincial Internship Programme;
- 1495 unemployed youth have been enrolled in Learnership Programmes; and
- 2120 unemployed youth are participating in Skills Programmes supported by the majority of the Sector Education and Training Authority.
- Employment of 501 Hlasela workers in Batho, Jacobsdal, Henneman and Jagersfontein as part of the Expanded Public Works Programme.

Out of the 400 bursary holders who completed their studies 113 have already been employed in full time positions as nurses, veterinarians, engineers and social workers.

Honourable Speaker, our plans for the coming years are in line with the New Growth Path, which emphasizes job creation in sectors like manufacturing, agriculture, rural development and agro-processing, mining and beneficiation and infrastructure.

We echo the statement of the President in his recent State of the Nation Address that job creation will be the main focus this year. While our strategy aims to improve and enhance job creation in the private sector, we will continue to consciously maximize the job-creation potential of the public sector. The major initiatives for this year include:

- The filling of the identified and prioritized 2408 funded vacancies across provincial departments with suitably qualified and competent people.
- The establishment of a Job Creation Task Team to coordinate job creation projects with the private sector and other stakeholders in the province.

- The expansion and creation of jobs in the agriculture sector, through cooperatives, stokvels and non-governmental and community-based organisations.
- In this province, we shall consider and actively explore opportunities in the green economy.
- We shall focus on actively promoting the tourism industry in our Province. Honourable Speaker, the people of the Free State and South Africa must be encouraged to explore the tourism potential of our Province.
- We should all become familiar with the majestic beauty of the east, the wide open plains of the south, the winelands of the west and the weekend getaways of the north of our Province.
- We shall focus on assisting the existing SMMEs, cooperatives, including working and supporting well-established commercial enterprises.
- We shall embark on a massification campaign that involves immense labour intensive initiatives. The provincial government, in partnership with the private sector, will focus on the following job creation initiatives:
 - The establishment of a tyre recycling plant in Sasolburg, which will process 1.2 million tyres per year. This project will create 120 permanent jobs.
 - The setting up of a Kraft Paper Manufacturing facility, which will create 500 jobs.
 - The employment of youth in programmes to repair potholes, low bridges and cemetery management. We have bought the necessary equipment and machinery to be used to repair potholes using labour-intensive methods.
 - The development of a potato chip manufacturing plant in Industriqwa in Qwaqwa, which will employ 100 people.

During this year, the Provincial Government will consult with key stakeholders, to explore innovative job creation strategies for the people of the province.

Roads and Transport

The Department of Police, Roads and Transport has a key role to play in the provision of infrastructure and rendering of services that facilitate and enhance economic growth.

We are developing systems and capacity in the Department to enable it to better respond to the ever-growing demands of transport and road infrastructure network. The recent floods have exacerbated the poor conditions of our roads. The Free State has been included amongst the provinces declared as disaster areas. The planning processes to best utilize disaster funding for urgently required repair work, has commenced.

In a month's time, qualified and registered engineers will assume duty in this Department. We are also employing additional traffic officers to keep our roads safe and to help in registering the conditions of our roads. The construction of roads will also be a key component of the Expanded Public Works Programme. We will continue to engage other stakeholders in an effort to improve our roads.

Using the massification method, several roads will be upgraded and re-graveled. These include the Monontsha Border Post, Koppiesdam, Thaba Phatswa, Rouxville and Phahameng access roads.

The revitalisation of the rail network between Botshabelo, Thaba Nchu and Bloemfontein as one of the main anchor transport projects to accelerate transport infrastructure is nearing completion. Furthermore, we will engage PRASA, Interstate Bus Service and the National Department of Transport to finalise this project.

To address the backlog in licensing and registration of vehicles, testing stations are now open during weekends. The construction of intermodal transport centres and taxi ranks in various towns is well underway as an effort to revamp public transport.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT, LAND AND AGRARIAN REFORM

Honourable Speaker and Members, the outcome-based approach of this government, has allowed us to cast our focus on rural development, land and agrarian reform. This has created

the space for the Free State to take its rightful place on the national stage. We have directed our rural development initiatives to remotest areas of the Free State such as:

- Diyatalawa / Makgolokweng in the Maluti-a-Phofung Local Municipality
- Cornelia in the Mafube Local Municipality
- Jagersfontein in the Kopanong Local Municipality
- Marabastad in the Moqhaka Local Municipality
- Paul Roux in the Dihlabeng Local Municipality
- Jacobsdal in the Letsemeng Local Municipality and
- Van Stadensrus in the Naledi Local Municipality.

Over the 2010/2011 reporting period, we have;

- Demolished dilapidated two-roomed houses and replaced them with decent houses;
- Completed a new school in Diyatalawa as well as a school, crèche and ninety-nine houses in Makgolokweng. Significant progress to complete the construction of a community hall in Makgolokweng has also been made;
- Continued with renovations of schools and a community hall in Jagersfontein;
- Created 260 bigger and better houses for the people of Maqhekung who are now proud home owners.

Recently, we decided to incorporate Rural Development into the Department of Agriculture to improve the coordination, facilitation and implementation of our rural development programme. The integration is also aligned to the roll-out of the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) in districts, especially where we work towards the upscale of community projects.

To this end, I wish to announce that, in partnership with the private sector, the national Department of Agriculture, Fishery and Forestry and other commodity groups, this year we shall implement high impact vegetable and grain projects which are expected to yield huge investment returns for the Province.

We will upscale the farming operation at Wilhelmina agri-village, and continue our investment in proper machinery to enable the required value-adding in respect of dairy products and fruits.

In the Eastern Free State, there is a dairy run by fifty farmers. We will invest in this industry through purchasing milking machines, milking parlours and cooling tanks. In Xhariep, Motheo and Fezile Dabi, we will install needed irrigation systems. The province has set aside funds through the CASP and Ilima programmes to assist all farmers.

Enige regdenkende Vrystater weet dat boerdery baie belangrik is. Die Vrystaatse Regering bedank ons boere vir hul bydrae aan ons mense. Boere voorsien kos, werk en onbaatsugtige hulp aan ons gemeenskappe.

Tydens die onlangse vloede het verskeie boere gehelp om lewens en eiendom te beskerm en te red. Ons moet ook veral die boere en plaaswerkers van Bultfontein, Mafube en Ficksburg uitsonder. Julle het kosbare tyd, geld en masjinerie beskikbaar gestel om dorpe skoon te maak en slaggate heel te maak. Weet dat julle gewaardeerde Vrystaters is!

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

There can be no doubt that our people's experience with local government and human settlements, service delivery is a key contributor in the overall perception of government as a whole. Local government is at the coal face of service delivery, and we cannot be found wanting in our commitment and effort to ensure that this sphere of government operates at maximum efficiency and effectiveness levels.

We set ourselves an ambitious target to achieve clean audits in provincial and local government by 2014. A pilot campaign was implemented to provide support and skills-transfer to identified local municipalities through the launching of Operation Clean Audit. We have encouraged and assisted local and district municipalities to employ skilled and qualified professionals at executive and senior management level, including Chief Financial Officers. Various chartered accountants have been employed in municipalities to improve and enhance their financial management skills.

We are pleased that our intervention is producing results. Four district municipalities, namely Fezile Dabi, Motheo, Thabo Mofutsanyana and Lejweleputswa have received unqualified audit reports for the last municipal audit period. The Xhariep District Municipality also improved its

audit outcome from a disclaimer received during the 2008/09 financial year to a qualified report for the 2009/10 financial year.

A Task Team dealing with municipal accounts has been established to assist municipalities to clear accounts, as well as to reconcile asset registers. The Free State has received accolades from National Treasury for being the only Province in the country that paid out 100% of the rates and taxes grant to municipalities in the previous financial year. We are also rendering highly specialised support to municipalities to ensure alignment of their Integrated Development Plans with the Municipal Turn-Around Strategies and budgets.

Honourable Speaker, the undeniable reality is that many localities in the Free State do not have a sufficient tax base to enable self-sustaining local municipalities. These municipalities do not only require support from the provincial government, but need the support of national government as well. We should, actually, give further consideration to a model that will create viable municipal governments throughout the Province.

The answer does not lie in a demarcation process that results, for example, in incorporating a primarily poverty-ridden locality such as the Naledi Local Municipality into the even poorer Xhariep district. This will not achieve the objective of achieving **“a responsive, accountable, effective and efficient local government system”**.

We must continue to provide support to our local municipalities and we will adopt poor municipalities, which are struggling to make ends meet. We therefore remain committed to assisting struggling municipalities such as those in the Xhariep District and many including Naledi, Letsemeng, and Phumelela municipalities.

At this point, Honourable Speaker, we must also pay tribute to the contribution of the late mayor of the Naledi Local Municipality, comrade Motlatsi Motloi, who was brutally murdered last year.

Let there be no doubt that municipalities must get the basics right. Consistent maintenance of existing infrastructure must be supported by adequate and appropriate budget allocations and comprehensive planning must be done for infrastructure development. Working together, we can build better communities.

We will continue to engage Eskom regarding municipalities which are battling to pay their electricity bill. Allow me, Honourable Speaker, to pause briefly on this matter.

The 2009 /2010, South African Survey, released by the South African Institute of Race Relations, reflects that 91.7 percent of households in the Free State have electricity. The number of households receiving free electricity as a proportion of total households receiving electricity was determined at 63.1 percent.

Given the fact that few municipalities have a sustainable and sufficient tax base, it is not surprising that the local government sector faces particular challenges with the payment of Eskom accounts. This is part of what will continue to drive our green energy initiative throughout the province.

Honourable Speaker, we are all aware that Acting President Kgalema Motlanthe announced the date of the forthcoming municipal elections yesterday. It is confirmed that we will vote on 18 May for our local government representatives.

We have full confidence in the ability of the Independent Election Commission to ensure that voter registration, as well as the elections run smoothly and effectively. All South Africans must make full use of the last voter registration weekend of 5 to 6 March set by the IEC to ensure that their names appear correctly on the voters roll.

I am also quite sure that all political parties represented in this Honourable House will ensure that their conduct reflect the spirit of the free and fair elections that have characterized our democratic processes in the past.

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

The challenges of the human settlement environment in the Free State have had a significant impact on our ability to deliver on the human settlement mandate in the current financial year. Quite frankly, we had to get our house in order before we could build houses! We have faced particular challenges in clearing beneficiary lists, land ownership and availability; the non-provision or unavailability of bulk infrastructure such as water and sanitation which resulted in

the province returning R 263 million to the National Treasury. We commit ourselves to spend every cent in this financial year.

We have now put corrective measures in place to capacitate the Department of Human Settlements. We have experienced some challenges in the recruitment of qualified and competent people. This has at last been achieved through the establishment and appointment of the Provincial Infrastructure Unit.

This Unit is actually located in the Department of Public Works and comprises of **qualified and competent registered** civil, mechanical and electrical engineers, quantity surveyors, architects and other professionals. These professionals will specifically be assigned to infrastructure projects to be undertaken by the Education, Health and Human Settlement Departments of the provincial government.

We have made significant progress in the provision of basic services such as water, electricity, and sanitation in most of our municipalities. In addition, one hundred and thirty one thousand (131 000) title deeds have been handed over to beneficiaries. In Thaba Nchu alone, 1460 beneficiaries received title deeds. We will continue to issue more title deeds to various communities during the next year.

Allow me to also inform this Honourable House that a total of 437 land claims lodged have been finalized. We only have 21 outstanding claims. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Regional Land Claims Commissioner Sydney Hlongwane and Thuso Motaung for their hard work and dedication to the restitution programme.

Mr. Speaker, the provision of decent houses to all our people, particularly the poor who live in shacks, and old dilapidated houses, continues to receive our attention. We are, however, not merely concerned about giving people shelter. Our aim is to build safe, sustainable and integrated communities where people live close to their workplaces and schools, and have access to public transport, health care and recreational facilities.

We are determined to move away from the apartheid human settlements pattern, which isolated the majority of our people from centres of economic activity and access to services. We have developed different designs for RDP houses. Perhaps I should again state the obvious. The

financial burden on the State of having to pay grants to the unemployed, the uneducated and economically inactive people with no way out of poverty, will be alleviated through dignified shelter and economic development.

This year the township revitalisation programme will focus on developing the so-called coloured areas such as Heidedal, Bronville, Brentpark, Schonchenville, Bakenpark and Saundersville.

Over the next year, we shall build 12 500 housing units, as well as 13 multi-purpose centres in the Province. We commit before this Honourable House that we will ensure the maximum spending on the human settlement conditional grant.

In our pursuit to build more houses for our people, we are exploring the Enhanced People Housing model that is being implemented in KwaZulu-Natal. We believe that it may be possible to build an additional 20 000 houses through this ground breaking model.

Honourable Speaker, social housing has become one of our major human settlements delivery thrusts in the province. This year, we shall facilitate the development of social housing, community rental units and affordable rental housing units in the following areas:

- Brandwag in Bloemfontein
- White, Silver and Dark City Hostels in Mangaung
- G-Hostel Thabong, in Matjhabeng
- Zamdela Communal Rental Units in Metsimaholo, and
- Viljoenskroon

In partnership with the private sector, we will also facilitate access to affordable housing finance, through piloting a project of Housing Assistance for Public Servants. A total of 250 housing units are planned in Nala and 500 in Brandwag, Bloemfontein. Planning of the Brandwag housing project is complete; we are now in the process of implementing.

We are engaged in discussions with the banking sector to involve them in the development and implementation of affordable rental units. We are also looking at Vista Park as a potential development area for affordable housing units.

This year we will appoint well-established companies to provide the people of the Free State with quality services. We will encourage well-established companies to link-up and work with SMMEs and BBBEE companies. Our bottom line is that quality services must be delivered on time to ensure value for money.

Honourable Speaker, this year we will lead the biggest cleaning campaign in towns throughout the Free State. Mayors, business and communities, *wit en swart*, are invited to join this campaign to ensure that, as a collective, we keep our environment clean. This campaign will include the EPWP programme of;

- repairing potholes
- paving of roads
- naming and graveling of streets
- the provision of physical addresses, signage, road markings and
- cutting of exotic trees.

Moreover, I will spearhead the campaign to ensure that all partially built houses are completed. As we roll out this campaign, we would like to invite the people of South Africa to witness the impact of our service delivery mechanism, Operation Hlasela.

FIGHT AGAINST CRIME AND CORRUPTION

We are confident that we are on track in fighting crime and corruption. Currently, the crime statistics show a reduction of crime by 10 percent and a sharp decline in common robberies. According to the 2009 Mid Year Estimates of Statistics South Africa, the public approval of feeling safe in Free State is the highest in the country at 52 percent. This far exceeds the national average of 38 percent.

The commercial farmers throughout the province, particularly in areas such as Bultfontein, Mafube and Ficksburg have shown their eagerness to support government in the fight to combat crime. We have donated two patrol vehicles to these communities to strengthen and enhance rural safety. We urge all community members to stand up and root out criminal activities in our society.

Re tshwela ka mathe dipeto le dipolao tsa borapolasi, basebetsi le mapolesa. Re bone moraora o tjena Parys ho nyoloha ha diketsahalo moo ho betwang metsofe. Re lokela ho ema ka maoto kaofela ho ripitla baetsi ba diketso tsena tse tshabehang.

Ho feta moo, re tla matlafatsa mehato ya ho fedisa marangrang a dikgwebo tse seng molaong tsa dithethefatsi. Re tla kwala dithavene tse etsang kgwebo pela dikolo le dikereke. Re tla nka dilaesense tsa ba tla fumanwa ba le molato wa ho rekisetsa bana jwala kgahlano le molao (Liquor Act).

Ha re hlaseleng botahwa, ha re hlaseleng boshodu, ha re hlaseleng.

We will continue to consolidate practical steps towards cross-border crime prevention initiatives between the Free State Province and the Government of Lesotho, to reduce stock theft and our vulnerability to the outbreak of animal diseases.

Social Development

Dithethefatsi di setisa merero ya ho ntshetsa pele batjha ba rona. Re keke ra lala taba ena ka mmele, re tla fata makwatsi ho netefatsa hore batjha jwalo ka bokamoso ba naha ena ba dula ba le ka pele mererong ya mmuso ya ntshetsopele.

Ho lwantsha bolweetse bona bo fifatsang bokamoso ba batjha, re etsa setsha sa nako tsohle se phekolang bokgoba ba dithethefatsi sa Eureka, Thaba Nchu.

The conditions of some of the Early Childhood Development centres in certain rural and informal areas across the province are poor. We have undertaken to assist the ECD centers in Xhariep and Thabo Mofutsanyana to ensure that children have decent classrooms.

In addition, we will provide learning material and toys to these impoverished centres so that our children receive adequate educational stimulation.

Part of our core mandate as a caring government, is to ensure the inclusion and acceptance of the vulnerable groups into our communities. An unused protective workshop in the Thabo

Mofutsanyana district will be refurbished to create suitable accommodation that caters for the special needs of disabled people.

We will create job opportunities for women and youth cooperatives with the launch of the “Zero Hunger” Strategy that seeks to provide subsidized cooked, nutritious and quality meals. These meals will be served to every hungry person who enters the restaurants established for this purpose and will be treated with dignity and respect.

Ha re hlaseleng tlala le bofuma.

NATION BUILDING AND SOCIAL COHESION

South Africa, with the support of the entire continent, was able to deliver a highly successful 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup. Allow me to use this opportunity, Honourable Speaker, to congratulate the Executive Mayor of the Mangaung Local Municipality, Cde Playfair Morule, for the excellent performance of Mangaung as one of the host cities during the World Cup. The Executive Mayor and his team did us as the Free State proud - and we must acknowledge their achievement.

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of various other public and private sector partners and stakeholders who worked tirelessly to ensure that we meet our obligations towards the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

The unity of the people of Africa and especially South Africa was demonstrated and experienced by the entire world. The World Cup brought us closer towards the realisation of our dream of building a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous South Africa. We have distinguished ourselves as a diverse nation, united in a common purpose - much to the envy of our visitors.

As the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Dr Zweli Mkhize said: “The World Cup is gone, but we need to recapture the spirit of oneness, friendship, love and remind ourselves that we are a nation destined for greatness.”

We will use the experience of the 2010 FIFA World Soccer World Cup to continue to build the nation. Today, we are demonstrating our support for the Magnificent Friday Campaign. We also pronounce our unqualified support for the Proteas as they compete in the ICC World Cup. We will support the Springboks, as they set out to defend their World Championship Title later this year. Our support for the South African netball team remains steadfast.

Honourable Speaker, the potential of nation building through sport and recreation is uniquely South African. Let me take this opportunity to announce that the Free State provincial government intends to purchase the naming rights of the Free State Stadium from the Free State Rugby Union and to provide financial support to the Griffons and Cheetahs rugby teams.

We have engaged in talks with the Free State Rugby Union and expect to finalize our commitments in this regard in the near future. We will also provide further support to Bloemfontein Celtics and Free State Stars during the forthcoming financial year.

As we continue building the legacy of 2010, we shall develop infrastructure and recreational facilities in our communities across the province. In honour of one of our greatest South African soccer administrators, Dr Irvin Khoza, we shall establish the Irvin Khoza Hlasela Football Tournament.

In addition to the renovation of the Seisa Ramabodu Stadium, we will implement a stadia renovation programme over the medium-term period of 2012 to 2014 which shall result in the upgrade of stadia such as Zuka Baloyi, Sipho Mutsi, Zamdela, Fezile Dabi, Botshabelo, Bohlokong and Maokeng.

He re hlaseleng botswa – let us exercise!

We will further engage with artists from all genres in the Free State as this is one sector that we have not sufficiently engaged and empowered. Although we have managed to sustain certain flagship programmes like MACUFE, our investment in the culture sector has lagged behind. Working together, we will certainly be able to chart a way that will promote our provincial arts and culture sector in a sustainable manner.

Local and International Partnerships

In July, we will celebrate the 15th anniversary of recorded formal international relations and exchanges by the Free State government and sister provinces globally. This anniversary confirms the mutual benefits derived from cooperation with foreign partners. Our collaboration and partnership with the Provinces of countries such as Cuba, Belgium, China and Lesotho have been significantly productive.

Last week on 25 February 2011, we entered into an agreement with the African Chinese Charity Foundation (ACCF) to strengthen our existing ties with the Chinese business community. A group of Chinese business people signed an agreement with the Mafube Municipality to set up a plant, which will produce 300 000 chickens a day, thus creating job opportunities for the people in that area.

We have made reference to our partnership programme with Netcare which will focus on the training of 100 nurses for the Free State Province. As the provincial government, we will pay for the accommodation of the nursing students, while they are studying. We extend our appreciation to the Netcare Group for making available a Mobile Breast Cancer Screening Programme to our province, which will be utilized to encourage testing for breast cancer, particularly in remote rural areas.

Vrystaat Koöperasie Beperk (VKB), one of our key partners in agriculture, is currently constructing an abattoir in Reitz, which is anticipated to employ up to 600 local people. In Vrede, VKB will build an animal feed factory that is expected to create 70 jobs.

The provincial government will engage Eskom to facilitate the connection of electricity in the areas where job creation is planned. As committed last year, we will continue to interact with commercial farmers to empower our small and emerging farmers.

Locally we have joined hands with big retail stores such as Pick 'n Pay and Shoprite Checkers to assist emerging farmers to identify markets for their produce.

Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Planning Commission has engaged the Human Science Research Council to facilitate the review of the Free State Growth and Development Strategy. The reviewed strategy is expected to chart the way for a comprehensive Free State Economic Development Plan. Through strengthening our planning and research capacity, we will sustain enhanced levels of planning and coordination between the different spheres of government.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Branch in the Department of the Premier will be expected to play a far more rigorous role in ensuring that provincial government departments deliver on the outcome-based priorities and on their Annual Performance Plans. The Provincial Treasury will also be expected to continue its role in monitoring the financial management and expenditure of provincial departments.

There will be no mercy for non-spending in 2011. We will strictly account for our spending to the President, National Treasury, the Provincial Legislature and the people of the province. The Province will also be required to table a report on its performance during June with the Presidency.

We will also convene an *imbizo* with our own public servants this year to achieve quality service delivery.

Gender and Disability

The Free State provincial government remains committed to achieving our equity targets, specifically with regard to gender and disability. We have consciously employed skilled and qualified women in executive and senior management positions throughout the provincial government.

We remain conscious of the imperative to address gender equity at local government level and remain committed to encourage the local government sector to broaden the gender representivity of women at Municipal Manager Level.

We will work hard to advance the rights of women and children, as well as the needs of the people disabilities, including access to public buildings and appropriate housing.

Census 2011

In October this year, our country will once again undertake a census to count its citizens. The census results help government to ensure equity in the distribution of government services and the allocation of resources in areas such as education and health. We, therefore, want to urge all members of the public to participate in Census 2011 and to make sure that they are counted.

CONCLUSION

Ke qetele ka ho isa diteboho tse kgethehileng ho emong wa mesuwetsana ya ka, Mme Lofafa ya teng ka hara rona.

Let me also thank Members of the Executive Council, the African National Congress, members of the opposition parties, the Director General, Heads of Departments, the people of the Free State and South Africa for your unwavering support. My gratitude also goes to public servants, media, my family, friends and comrades.

LONG LIVE UMKHONTO WE SIZWE, LONG LIVE!

LONG LIVE THE SPIRIT OF OLIVER TAMBO, LONG LIVE!

LONG LIVE THE SPIRIT OF CHRIS HANI, LONG LIVE!

LONG LIVE NELSON ROLIHLAHLA MANDELA, LONG LIVE!

LONG LIVE PRESIDENT JACOB ZUMA, LONG LIVE!

LONG LIVE THE PEOPLE OF THE FREE STATE AND SOUTH AFRICA, LONG LIVE!

LONG LIVE THE ANC, LONG LIVE!

HAAK VRYSTAAT!

Ke a leboha.