

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY GAUTENG PREMIER DAVID MAKHURA ON THE OCCASION OF THE YOUTH SERVICE EXCELLENCE AWARDS AT ST GEORGE'S HOTEL, TSHWANE.**

**11 March 2017**

Members of the Executive Council

Representatives of local government

Leaders of youth and student formations

Leaders of business

Representatives of civil society

The nominees of this the inaugural Youth Service Excellence and Awards

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Youth of Gauteng:

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of February, we recognised and acknowledged those individuals, businesses and organisations who are playing a critical role in the transformation, modernisation and re-industrialisation of Gauteng. We did this through the Premier's Service Excellence Awards.

Tonight we are gathered here at the Inaugural Premier's Youth Excellence and Service Awards to acknowledge and celebrate the creativity, boundless energy and entrepreneurial excellence of the youth of our province.

We do this in order to make an indisputable and profound statement that since 1994, there is no ANC-led administration that has paid so much attention to the question of youth unemployment. There is no government in our province, that has dedicated so much energy, policy and resources towards opening opportunities for the youth of all sectors.

We are doing all the interventions to give young people a second chance in life because we believe in our youth. To believe in the youth is to believe in the future.

Allow me to quote the words of one of the colossal icons of our struggle for liberation and one of the founders of the youth movement in our country; Anton Lembede who had the following to say about the commitment required from young people:

*"We are not called to peace, comfort and enjoyment, but to hard work, struggle and sweat. We need young men and women of high moral stamina and integrity; of courage and vision. In short, we need warriors. This means that we have to develop a new type of youth of stoical discipline, trained to endure suffering and difficulties. It*

*is only this type of youth that will achieve the national liberation of the African people.”*

Ladies and Gentlemen, on this day we are paying tribute to our youth warriors, who have demonstrated tremendous courage and clarity of vision. Young men and women of stoical discipline who continue to make a contribution in the transformation and development of our society.

In particular, those we are celebrating today are young people who are the shock troopers of our programme for radical transformation, modernisation and reindustrialisation of the Gauteng City Region.

Celebrating youth excellence and service is based on our conviction that young people are the best asset for the development of any nation. We continue to look up to young people for bold, innovative and inspiring solutions even to the most difficult challenges of our time.

Through your dynamism, creativity and idealism we believe that you can lead a global revolution to break the patterns of the past and set the world on a course and to a more sustainable future. Our immediate task, therefore, is to unleash this potential that is inherent in our young people – to free the potential of our young people.

We also know too well that the world is getting younger with more than half of the world's population being under the age of 24 years. Equally with more than 200 million people aged between 15 and 24 years, our continent has the youngest population in the world.

Consistent with this trend, Gauteng's population is mainly constituted by young people. More than 58% of the 13.4 million people who call Gauteng their home are below the age of 35 years, and 34.2% of Gauteng's population is between the ages of 15 and 34 years.

It is for this reason that in my inaugural State of the Province Address, I declared boldly that the youth are the future of Gauteng!

Accordingly, I committed the administration I have the honour to lead to working with you and the youth formations to respond to their on-going challenges and to engage young people further on how together we can enhance initiatives aimed at addressing your plight.

We have also consistently made the point that; to us nothing is more urgent than giving hope to our youth through quality education, decent employment and sustainable entrepreneurship opportunities.

Ladies and Gentlemen; globally youth unemployment and the economic exclusion of young people are the main challenges of our time – 2 out of 3 young people in developing economies are without work, not studying or engaged in irregular or informal employment.

We in the Gauteng City Region also face a similar problem. Currently in Gauteng, there are 2.7 million young people of working age who are not in education or in employment.

Unemployment in our province amongst working age youth grew from 32.4 % to 39.8% over the period 2008 to 2015. This represents a 7.3 % increase, compared to a 6.2 % increase in unemployment for other working age group. These numbers point to the painful reality that young people are disproportionately affected by unemployment – as unemployment in general worsens young people bear the most brunt.

Many of these young people, who are neither in school nor at work, end up getting involved in social ills such as drug and substance abuse as well as crime, including violent crime. It is these young people, who are among the most vulnerable in our society. Addressing their plight keeps us awake at night.

A comprehensive response to this problem, which has now reached epidemic proportions, requires that we forge new and strengthen existing partnerships for youth development and empowerment. It requires the joining of efforts, resources and capabilities in eliminating all barriers that young people face in reaching their full potential and in living meaningful and productive lives.

Together, working in partnership, we must do everything necessary to ensure that our society and our economy do not leave young people behind! In this way we will be shaping a better future for our country. We will also be building the next generation of leaders in our society.

Ladies and gentlemen, our biggest investment in youth development and empowerment is in the area of education. In Gauteng we are spending close to R40 billion on basic education per annum.

To-date 2.2 million young people are attending our public schools, with more than 1.3 million of them enrolled in our no fee schools and being provided with at-least one meal per school day. More than 99 000 of our learners are provided with free scholar transport to ensure that they never miss a day at school.

Also to ensure that especially our girl learners never miss school, we are currently supplying more than 300 000 girl learners with dignity packs. We have now taken a decision that we must expand this number to 1 million by 2019.

We have tremendously improved the performance of our township schools through better infrastructure and quality learning and teaching – our township schools are increasingly becoming centres of educational excellence.

The performance gap between the no-fee schools and fee paying schools has narrowed significantly - from 27.2% in 2011 to 11.5% in 2016. Our goal of a 0% gap in performance between fee paying and no fee schools is within reach.

It is to us a matter of pride that more than 60% of the progress learners that we gave an opportunity to write Grade 12 last year now have matric certificates, giving them a better chance to enter the labour market. These learners have been given a second chance in life to become better citizens. Had we not intervened in this way these learners would be roaming our streets.

We continue to invest in the building of new schools to respond to the challenge of urbanisation and in-migration. Currently we are opening one state of the art school in the townships almost every month!

We are modernizing the education system through the introduction of ICT in education. We are also building schools of specialization to equip our young people with skills that will prepare them not only to be employed but to also be employers themselves.

Since 2014 more than 10 000 learners mainly from our no-fee schools have been allocated bursaries to further their studies at tertiary institutions. Thus far as Gauteng we have invested more than R 800 million in bursaries for higher education and our target is to reach R 1 billion by 2019.

To respond comprehensively to the problem of out of work and out of school and training youth, and in order to give these young people a second chance in life, in 2014 we launched Tshepo 500 000.

Tshepo 500 000 is a youth development and empowerment initiative wherein we are partnering with the private sector to offer work placement, skills development and entrepreneurial opportunities for young people. The programme has thus far benefitted more than 350 000 young people across Gauteng.

As I announced during the State of the Province Address, Tshepo 500 000 is now being upgrade to Tshepo One Million so that we can reach at least 1 million young people by 2019. We are doing this because youth unemployment and economic marginalisation is a mass scale problem requiring a mass scale response. The time for small scale, minimalist and ineffective intervention is no more! The problem is massive. The response must be equally massive.

In order to impact positively on the lives of at least One Million young people in Gauteng, we have forged new partnerships:

- Our partnership with Microsoft to provide 1 million young people with training opportunities in digital skills.
- Our partnership with the Massive Open Online Varsity (MOOV) to enable 80 000 young people to access free, high quality on line university education.
- Our partnership with the Business Process Outsourcing Sector to facilitate the creation of 20 000 digital jobs for young people over the next three years.
- Our partnership with Buddibox and the National Youth Development Agency to provide 10 000 ownership and entrepreneurial opportunities in the cooperative wholesale and retail sector.
- Our partnership with Coca Cola will provide employment and new enterprise opportunities for young people through up to 30 000 new retail outlets mainly in the townships.

We are also partnering with SAP on the following initiatives:

- Training of graduates in high market demand ICT skills.
- The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programme that will benefit 10 000 youth annually
- Training of disabled learners in computer literacy

Further discussions are taking place with the logistics, fast moving consumer goods (FMCG), retail, real estate, food and beverages, defence and aerospace and automotive industry leaders to open more opportunities for our young people.

We continue to use government procurement to support business owned by young people. As the Gauteng Provincial Government we are spending more than 91% of our procurement budget of R 46 billion over three years on historically disadvantaged individuals. This includes young people.

Over the past two years we have supported 9 522 youth owned township enterprises. A total of 5 097 young people have received training in automotive, film, ICT, tooling, foundry, furniture, tourism and jewellery skills.

Furthermore, in excess of 102 000 young people have already benefitted from our Expanded Public Works programme. We are now expanding these opportunities to reach 300 000 young people.

To further strengthen our youth development and empowerment initiatives we have decided to take over the highly effective Jozi@Work programme and are now expanding it to Gauteng@Work targeting especially young people. Gauteng@Work is a community empowerment programme where township enterprises are subcontracted to do government work.

Programme Director, Ladies and Gentlemen, we are doing all of these things to give practical meaning to our on-going commitment to youth development and empowerment.

The youth of our province have made it clear to us that they don't want hand-outs. They want a hand up. They want a helping hand not dependency or patronage. They have said to us that they have exciting ideas and creative energy to help build the Gauteng City Region of our dreams; that we can all be proud to call home.

On this important occasion I wish to assure the youth of our province that in us you have a reliable and dependable partner in advancing youth development and empowerment.

We stand ready to continue forming transformative and enduring partnerships with youth formations, civil society and business to unleash the potential of our young people.

Once again to borrow from the words of Anton Lembede, we are ready to work with our young warriors, who have courage and vision; youth of stoical discipline, trained to endure suffering and difficulties as we transform, modernise and reindustrialise the Gauteng City Region.

Congratulations to all those who have been nominated for these awards. To the winners in the various categories we say well done. Keep up the good work. May your achievements inspire other young people to follow in your foot-steps.

The future belongs to our youth. The youth must go out there and seize opportunities created by our government, in partnership with the private sector.

Best wishes to nominees and congratulations to the award winners.

Thank you.