

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY SPEAKER OF THE KWAZULU-NATAL LEGISLATURE HONOURABLE  
NELISWA NKONYENI MPL, DURING THE SITTING OF THE YOUTH PARLIAMENT AT  
UNDERBERG OLD FARM GROUNDS**

**DATE 14<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2009**

Honourable Premier, Honourable Dr Zweli Mkhize  
Leader of Government Business, Honourable Willies Mchunu  
Members of the Executive Council  
Deputy Speaker, Honourable Mtholephi Mthimkhulu  
Members of the KZN Legislature  
Secretary to the Legislature  
Heads of provincial Government Departments  
Traditional Leaders present here  
Delegates from various youth formations  
Members of the Media  
Distinguished Guests  
The Management and staff of the KZN legislature present here,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

***“CELEBRATING A VIBRANT YOUTH VOICE”***

It gives me great pleasure to have an opportunity to address you on this first sitting of the Youth Parliament in the fourth term of our democratically elected legislature. As you will recall, we have just emerged from a grueling election period which has culminated in a new political dispensation and a new political leadership for our institution.

My party, the African National Congress, has deployed me to a challenging position of leading our Legislature during this current term. It is a challenge that I have fully

embraced and look forward to serving you with humility and dignity that you deserve as the citizens of our province.

I also wish to take this opportunity to commend all of you for coming forward in large numbers to cast your votes in the elections of 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2009. I want to particularly commend our future leaders, the youth of today, for showing great enthusiasm in the democratic processes of this country. The Independent Electoral Commission has commented that for the first time in the history of this country, young people came in large numbers, firstly, to register for elections and also to cast their votes on the Election Day. This has clearly demonstrated to us that young people have taken their rightful place in shaping the future of this country.

I am indeed humbled by your active participation in our electoral processes. Lest we forget, the youth has always been on the frontline in our struggle for political freedom. In 1976, the turning point in the history of this country, our young lions and lionesses took a decisive stance against the oppressive apartheid regime. They stood firm in rejecting the inferior Bantu Education which was being shoved down their throats by the apartheid regime, and for their stance, some of them paid the ultimate price. We dip our banners for heroes such as Hector Peterson and Tsietshi Mashinini in honour of their heroic efforts and their self-sacrifice.

The theme of this year's sitting of our youth parliament is ***"CELEBRATING A VIBRANT YOUTH VOICE"***. We have done this in recognition of the positive role which our youth continue to play in the politics of our country. We are equally committed to nurture our young people as they are the ones who will take over from us as leader when we are no longer in the public domain.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered today to advance the gains of the youth of 1976 and to consolidate our participatory democracy. We continue to view our youth as central in the advancement of our democracy. It is indeed heartening to note that our government continues to be sensitive to issues affecting the youth. There have been a number of milestones that we have achieved in our efforts at bringing issues affecting youth in our mainstream agenda, chief amongst these is the establishment of a new national Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and People with Disabilities headed by Nolutando Mayende-Sibiya. This positive development shows that our government is committed to advance the interests of these hitherto vulnerable groups in our society.

Ladies and Gentlemen, during his inaugural speech, His Excellency President Mr Jacob Zuma unveiled five key priority areas for government for the next five years. These are:-

1. Creation of decent work and sustainable livelihoods
2. Education
3. Health
4. Rural development, food security and land reform
5. The fight against crime and corruption.

The President elaborated on these during his State of the Nation Address. Amongst other things, the President announced that the Expanded Public Works Programme will be fast-tracked so that 500 000 jobs are created by December 2009. The unemployed youth are the primary targets in this regard.

Most significantly, the President announced that the National Youth Development Agency, formed through the merger of Umsobomvu Youth Fund and the National Youth Commission will be launched this coming Tuesday at Ekurhuleni. The institutions are being merged to enhance service and development opportunities provided to the youth.

As Legislature, we view this announcement by the President very positively as we feel that it provides with a clear blueprint of what our government seeks to achieve over the next five years. We believe that youth is central in our government achieving its objective.

Let me hasten to state that, as Legislature, we are fully aware of the challenges facing youth in our province. Through the youth Parliament programme that we initiated in 2004, our young people have gone to great lengths in highlighting the challenges they face on daily basis. These include:-

1. Skills shortage
2. Access to tertiary education
3. Access to financial institutions for SMME's
4. Lack of employment opportunities in public and private sector
5. HIV and Aids pandemic
6. Crime and substance abuse among youth

Indeed these are genuine matters that we feel a forum such as Youth Parliament should be able to address. In this regard, we have invited our Honourable Premier as well as all the MEC's and Heads of provincial Departments to be part of this youth sitting. We have done so because we know that our government, being a biggest employer in our province, is better suited to deal with the myriad of challenges facing the youth.

Notwithstanding the fact that our Honourable Premier will only deliver the State of the Province Address this coming Thursday, we are however confident that his address today will certainly deal with issues affecting youth. Therefore we have seen it proper to give our Premier a rare opportunity to unveil some of the programmes targeting youth that his cabinet will embark upon on the next five years.

As part of our oversight role as the Legislature, we will also keep a watchful eye on how our provincial government addresses the Millennium Development Goals which seeks, amongst other things, to achieve the following by 2014:-

- To eradicate extreme poverty.
- To achieve universal primary education.
- To promote gender equality and empower women.
- To reduce child mortality.
- To improve maternal health.
- To combat HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases.
- To ensure environmental sustainability.
- To develop a global partnership for development.

Before I conclude, allow me to re-iterate that our legislature is very passionate about issues affecting youth. Wherever we can, we try to give employment opportunities to new graduates in our Legislature. Through funding from EU LSP we have been able to employ interns for duration of one year. These interns are housed within the Public Participation and Petitions and Communication Units in the Legislature.

Owing to space constraints in our current legislature precinct, our efforts at expanding learnership programme or experiential learning continue to be limited. However, in the past, the Legislature has accepted learners from various educational institutions in order for them to be exposed to various functionaries within the legislature components. This forms part of their educational programmes as they will be receiving some of practical training pertaining to their areas of study.

Ladies and gentleman, with the aforementioned progress, allow me to state that youth empowerment is on top of our Legislature Programme. As Legislature we are more than willing to play our part in advancing issues of youth development. I look forward to a robust debate amongst the delegates on what they propose to be workable solutions to issues affecting young people I look forward to these presentations.

Lastly, I wish to thank all of you for coming in numbers to this important sitting. I wish you all the best during the Commissions as well as the actual sitting tomorrow.

I thank you