

**ADDRESS BY PREMIER DAVID MAKHURA AT THE RELEASE OF THE NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE RESULTS FOR THE CLASS OF 2016 ATCHIEF ALBERT LUTHULI PRIMARY SCHOOL IN DAVEYTON, CITY OF EKURHULENI.**

**05 January 2017**

The Minister of Basic Education, Hon. Angie Motshekga;

MEC for Education, Hon. Panyaza Lesufi;

Executive Mayors and Acting Executive Mayors;

Chairperson of the Education Portfolio Committee in the Gauteng Provincial Legislature, Hon. Joe Mpsi;

Members of Parliament and the Provincial Legislature;

Director General, the HOD of Education, Officials from the Gauteng Department of Education and senior government officials;

Representatives of School Governing Bodies;

Principals, Educators, Parents and Community Leaders;

Leaders of Trade Unions, Student Organisations, Business, Faith-based organisations and civil society;

Ladies and Gentlemen

The People of Gauteng:

Sanibonani. Dumelang. Avuxeni. Ndi matsheloni. Thobela. Goeie more. Good morning. Lotshani.

On behalf of the Gauteng Provincial Government, I hereby convey our gratitude and congratulations to the entire community of education stakeholders for their partnership in the education enterprise. In particular, I would like to say to the Class of 2016, you have made us proud and your hard work has paid off. Hard work always pays.

MEC Panyaza Lesufi has provided elaborate details and analysis about the Gauteng results. My task is to situate the work we are doing in Education within the context of our overall effort and radical Programme for Transformation, Modernisation and Re-industrialisation of our province in line with the NDP, Vision 2030.

The National Development Plan envisages a South Africa in which all citizens can read, write, converse, and value ideas and thought. This is a South Africa wherein we are all fascinated by the use of scientific invention and technological innovation to enhance the quality of life and standard of living of our people; a country in which there are good schools with well developed, professional and caring teachers; a society in which each community has a functioning school and committed teachers, learners who love teaching and learning, with a local library filled with a wealth of knowledge and a librarian.

We are building a country of our dreams where opportunity is determined not by birth, but by ability, education and hard work. In the South Africa envisaged in the NDP, the task of education and training system is to equip our youth with the values, critical thinking capabilities and core competencies that enable them to play their full role in the economy and society as responsible and conscientious global citizens and leaders in different fields of human endeavor.

Fellow Compatriots, in pursuit of the vision outlined in the NDP, we as the ANC-led fifth provincial administration in Gauteng have been working hard to improve the quality of education as the backbone of radical socio-economic transformation.

I would like to reassert some fundamental truths. The first truth we must internalise is that without investing in education, no nation can make sustainable social and economic progress. Without investing time, effort and resources in education, no family can escape the scourge of poverty in a sustainable manner. Without better education, there can be no better future for the African and Black child. Without good education, the project of economic freedom and social emancipation will not be sustained. We can try with tenders to empower black businesspeople but without education we will only produce tenderpreneurs instead of black entrepreneurs. There is no short-cut to radical socio-economic transformation. This is the truth that needs to be told again and again to our children and our youth.

This is reason education is the biggest investment and collective effort that every nation that wants sustainable and equitable development undertakes. We are happy that our national and provincial governments have declared education the number one priority of our entire society. We call on families and communities to demonstrate in action that education is the number one priority of our nation and that we are willing to forgo other niceties in order to guarantee all our children a better future.

The second truth that must be told is that good educational outcomes are a result of individual as well as collective effort. Without disciplined learners, capable teachers and supportive parents and community involvement, the education system cannot function. No school can perform well without all the combined effort of the role players. No learner can succeed without the support of teachers.

As we celebrate the achievements of the Class of 2016 and the shining stars of this generation of learners, we must also celebrate schools, communities and districts who contribute positively to good educational outcomes. Let us also celebrate the principals, teachers, parents and education officials who do their best to make it possible for our learners to achieve great results.

I want us to say thank you to the parents for their unwavering support. Let us also say thank you to the principals and teachers for their discipline and professionalism. Thank you to communities for their active involvement in the campaign to make our schools work. Thank you to the education officials for doing your job in the most dedicated manner possible. Thank you to trade unions and student organisations that do not disrupt education. We are partners in creating a better future.

We want to build a society of informed citizens and an inclusive economy that is modern, knowledge-based and innovation-driven. An economy and society in which all citizens participate meaningfully as equals and reach their full creative potential as productive human beings, as highly skilled workers and entrepreneurs.

It is for this reason that as a free and democratic society, the best investment we must make in our future should be to give our youth the quality of education that will empower them to play their roles and develop their full human potential as conscientious citizens with the attitudes, skills and capabilities.

As part of redressing the injustices and inequities of the persistent and stubborn reality of apartheid and colonialism, the ANC-led government has adopted policies that seek to place the poor at the centre of educational advancement.

We are deliberately investing huge resources to improve school attendance and educational outcomes among the poor households in the townships and villages - state of the art infrastructure, no-fee schools, nutrition and school uniforms.

Turning around the performance of our public schools and ensuring that learners from schools in townships and village do well is a very decisive act of radical transformation. We are glad to see the fact that learners from poverty-stricken schools in the townships and villages are among the top performers.

In Gauteng, we can proudly say that gone are the days when township schools and township learners were poor performers. Since 2011 we have managed to reduce the performance gap between fee paying and non-fee paying schools from 27.7% to 11.5%. Our goal is to reach a gap of 0% so that there is equity in the entire system and that our children can achieve great results regardless of whichever school they go to.

The 2016 results also demonstrate the drastic change in the profile of high achievers towards the townships with regards to distinctions and bachelor passes. Townships are becoming centres of educational excellence. This reinforces our strategic vision of turning townships into economic, social, cultural and educational centres of excellence.

Accordingly, we place greater emphasis on harnessing ICT to deliver education as part of modernising the delivery of public services. We also said we will pay attention to improving school infrastructure as part of ensuring expanded quality access to quality education.

Ladies and Gentlemen, on this occasion, we congratulate the Class of 2016 for achieving a provincial pass rate of 85.1% in the National Senior Certificate examinations – a 0.9% improvement from the 84.2% that was achieved by the Class of 2015. Today we say well done to the Class of 2016!

Let us remember that as a province we still have much more to realise our goals in education. As Gauteng, we are a province that prides itself on setting high standards of performance. We want to reach a 90% matric pass rate and 80% throughput rate by 2019. We also want 80% of our schools to achieve 80-100% pass rate by 2019. These are tough targets we have set for ourselves as part of the overall improvement in education.

We benchmark ourselves according to highest standards not only in our country but in the rest of the world. We are serious about producing learners that can compete successfully not only in our country but also on the global stage. We are building global citizens. We are also determined to ensure that our learners adequately prepared for their post schooling life.

As you all know, our province continues to be a centre of gravity for all those in search of better opportunities not only from other parts of our country but also from the rest of our continent and the world. On average more than 200 000 people migrate to Gauteng annually - amounting to more than 500 people a day every year. This places tremendous pressure on public resources, including in education.

We run the second biggest education system in our country. For instance enrollment in our public schools has grown from just over 1.3 million learners in 1994 to 2.2 million learners and more than 2000 schools in 2016, More than 70% of which are in the townships. In 2015, there were 1 163 722 learners in no-fee schools across the province and 1 331 717 learners receiving a meal at school daily.

Gauteng has the highest through-put in the country with a total of 77% of the learners that started Grade 1 in 2004 in our public schools reaching matric in 2015. This year the throughput rate is 73% but over the next two years it should gravitate to 80%.

Further, a total of 82 936 learners, who live more than 5 km from the nearest schools, are being transported to schools to ensure un-interrupted access to schooling. Currently 300 000 girl learners in Gauteng are receiving dignity packs. Our target is to provide 1 million girl learners with dignity packs by 2019.

Consistent with our commitment to addressing the plight of the girl learner, we are proud that the gender gap in respect of enrollment is zero in primary schools and that more girls complete schooling at Grade 12 than boys. Results for the Matric Class of 2016 show that there were more girl learners who sat for their matric exams than boy learners and that girl learners registered the most bachelor passes at 37% of the total. We are also continuing to increase our focus on the boy learners.

In 2016, there were 103 829 matriculants that entered the National Senior Certificate examinations – comparable in size only to KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo. Ours is the only province in the country where learners offer all the 11 official languages of our country. In addition, we offer at least 7 non-official languages, making our basic education system a global player for development.

Programme Director, despite all of this Gauteng continues to deliver an impressive set of matric results, providing evidence that the public education system we run in Gauteng is resilient, has come of age and continues to stand the test of time.

In addition, –We have contributed 23% to national bachelor passes and 22% to national distinctions. More than 73% of Gauteng learners passed either with a bachelor or a diploma pass and there has been a significant reduction in the number of learners who passed with senior certificates – we are satisfied that our public education system is now more rigorous and qualitative.

Equally, we are encouraged that the quality of our performance is spread evenly through-out the province with all our development corridors recording a pass rate of no less than 82%. This means that we are able to provide a relatively high standard of education in all parts of our province. No region or development corridor is left behind!

We are also delighted that our township schools have recorded the largest increases in matric passes for 2016. For instance the Johannesburg Central district which includes Soweto was the most improved region registering a 83.61% pass rate, significantly higher than the previous year's 77.1%. We have also reduced the number of schools that performed below 40% from 14 in 2014 to 2 in 2016. We are intervening to turn around the situation in the two schools that performed below 40%.

Collectively, these developments bring us to the conclusion that our pro-poor interventions in education are yielding results. Parents of our township learners no longer have to take their children to schools far from their homes in order to access quality and world class education. Gradually step by step we are succeeding in bringing quality education right in our townships.

Equally as a government that is not only about service delivery but also and most importantly about transformation, redress and equity, we are also delighted that included in those learners who sat for their matric exams in 2016 are 11 000 progress learners. These are learners who could have fallen out of the system to join the ranks of the unemployed and unskilled youth. Had we not given these learners a second chance in life, their future would be bleak. 61% of these learners have passed their matric exams and contributing significantly to creating hope.

It is always tempting to think of excluding the progressed learners because they pull the overall percentage slightly down. However, we can't pursue high percentage at the expense of giving our young people a second chance in life. We are about transformation and inclusion. We know too well that education is the greatest equaliser.

We are also pleased with the emerging evidence that our interventions to enable learning through ICT are also yielding results. The first school where we introduced ICT enabled learning, Boitumelong Secondary School in Tembisa, increased its pass rate from 70,9% in 2015 to 85,5% in 2016. We hope to report more progress in this regard.

In 2017, we take steps to increase collaboration with the private sector in to increase skills development and learnerships for those who to enter the Labour market, though our flagship Programme of Tshepo 500 000. Over the past two years, we have already assisted more 350 000 young people to access skills training, entrepreneurship development and job placement.

Furthermore, as part of our broader Human Resources Development Strategy, we are also working with the private sector as well as institutions of higher learning to ensure that we produce the kind of skilled people required by our modern and dynamic economy.

Lastly, we are also seeking greater partnerships with municipalities, the private sector, charity foundations and civil society groups in order to mobilise more bursaries to ensure that every learner who deserves to go to a TVET college or university is assisted.

Gauteng provincial government is already spending more than R560 million on bursaries, learnerships and internships benefitting more than 3500 students. Municipalities are spending close to R50 million. This figure will increase to R1 billion by 2019, reaching 5000 students in Gauteng. This is in addition to more than R17 billion spent by national government on NSFAS, benefitting 3 million students in TVET colleges and universities.

I would like to call on the private sector and charitable foundations to do more. As individual citizens who are better off, let us also do more to help educate the children whose parents cannot afford - among family members and community members. All of us can do something to give more young people hope and opportunities to build a better future by rebuilding their lives.

I would like to commend President Jacob Zuma for the work he is doing through JG Zuma Education Trust to help educate more young people from rural areas. He has set an example that must be emulated by all conscientious citizens with regard to how we can give young people who come from poor households opportunities to acquire skills and become productive citizens. I know many other leaders and celebrities who are highly involved educational initiatives. We know more support for education if we are to redress the historical inequities of the past and position our country as a winning and innovative nation.

My view is that more leaders and civil society groups should be challenged to make education a societal responsibility. Business can and must do more. Individuals can do more. Religious groups can do more. Charitable Foundations can do more. We can all do more to open access to higher education for every young person who has the capability and discipline required in higher education.

We never condemn the noble cause and quest for access to higher education by all deserving young South Africans. While we violent protests and disruption of examinations, the call for free higher education is not new. By and in itself, it is not wrong. SASCO made this call at the dawn of our democracy.

The recent protests around the astronomical costs of university and ongoing inequities created by a highly commodified public higher education are raising valid concerns. We need to do more as nation to ensure that no deserving learner or young person is denied access to higher education due to lack of funding.

We can all do something to give the youth hope and empower them with education and skills that will make them responsible, productive, active and conscientious citizens. The government must and can do more but the government cannot achieve this goal alone. Let us find more resources for education from Grade R, primary

education, secondary education and higher education. Together we can more to give our children and young people of our country a better future.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Class of 2016, all best performing learners who got distinctions in various subjects, the best performing schools and best performing districts, especially Gauteng West and Ekurhuleni North. Johannesburg Central must be commended for being the most improved. Sedibeng East and Tshwane South have regressed. Technical schools have also performed badly. MEC and GDE officials must camp in all poor performing districts and schools. No school or district should perform below 70% in Gauteng.

I know that the MEC is very concerned that Gauteng has fallen from position two to number three instead of progressing to position one. However, I would like say that as the Premier I am more concerned about the quality of passes - the performance of township-based schools and township learners demonstrates the progress we are making in equalising educational outcomes. We will reach our 90% target by 2019.

I have full confidence in you MEC Lesufi and I know that with you in charge of Education, Gauteng will go very far. I have full confidence in HOD Mosuwe and his team of officials.

To the Class of 2016, with your outstanding performance, the future of our country and province look brighter than it was yesterday. Go out there and represent us well. Those who are going to further and higher education, your work has just begun. Life at university and college level is different. You must attend classes, write exams and pass. It's cool to get educated. It is a revolutionary duty to pass!

Thank you.