

**MEDIA STATEMENT ON THE VISIT BY MECS TO UMZIMKHULU TO ADDRESS SECURITY
ISSUES FOLLOWING THE SHOOTING OF COUNCILLORS
UMZIMKHULU: FRIDAY, 14 JULY 2017**

Ladies and gentlemen of the media,

Thank you for availing yourselves for this media briefing at such a short notice.

Last night we received the tragic news that three councillors in this local municipality were shot at while returning from a meeting. This shocking incident took place at Ibisi bus stop. The information we have is that as the victims arrived at the bus stop, they were attacked by unknown assailants who were armed with rifles.

The victims sustained serious injuries after the suspects unleashed a hail of bullets at their car. The suspects are still at large. We have asked the police to work around the clock to ensure that perpetrators of this heinous crime are brought to book. We are not going to allow the dark forces and assassins roaming the streets of uMzimkhulu to de-stabilise this district.

As the Provincial Government, we have been noting, with great concern, the increase in attacks on elected representatives which does not augur well for our fledgling democracy. In the space of four months, two currently serving councilors and a former councilor have been brutally murdered in this municipality. This is a tragic development, which threatens to plunge this municipality into chaos and a state of ungovernability. It is also a direct attack on our democratic institutions and the right of people to elect their public representatives.

Indeed there are elements that are on the clandestine campaign to turn this region into a war zone. Clearly, this attack has the hallmarks of a carefully crafted plan to use intimidation and violence as a way of frustrating the will of the people. We have observed, with concern, that the modus operandi used in these killings is similar. Whilst we do not know the cause or the motive of these crimes, we are worried that the killing of councillors is becoming a disturbing trend. If this cowardly use of violence was carried out with the intention to subvert the will of the people, it will not succeed.

The people of KZN are resilient and have demonstrated this in difficult times at the height of political violence which ravaged the province in the past. This province is on the irreversible path to peace and our people are ready to thwart any efforts by the forces of evil to take us back to the sad history of violence.

This morning, we have been briefed by the police management that the police are on the ground and that soon all those responsible for this incident will be brought to book and face the full might of the law.

We have also received an update on the state of the councilors that were attacked; they are at this stage still in a critical but stable condition in hospital.

Among the interventions we are putting in place to curb the spate of killings in this region are the following:

- **With immediate effect, all cases are now handled by the National Police Task Team which is already in the area;**
- **We have increased police deployment in this area;**

- **We have engaged with the National Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster to assist with the reinforcement and they have confirmed their visit next week;**
- **High-level political interventions (intra- and inter-) are also going to take place to try and stop these killings; and**
- **The government is to embark on an ongoing engagement with the local community with a view to finding a lasting solution to these challenges.**

We call upon the leadership of the area to work together to ensure peace and stability in this area.

Also the Commission on political killings, led by Advocate Marumo Moerane, is continuing with its work. We wish to urge people of KZN to cooperate with this initiative in order to get into the bottom of these killings. We also urge the local community to remain calm and we stand by the families of the injured councillors during this difficult time.

Ends.