

Keynote Address

Technology and its Transfer are Important for Africa's Development

2nd Africa Technology Transfer Conference

Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal

Minister of Transport

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It gives me great pleasure to deliver this address today marking the first time South Africa is hosting this Technology Transfer Conference, an event that serves to broaden the reach and workings of the **now world-wide phenomenon** of Technology Transfer Centres (T² Centres). Initiated by the US Federal Highway Administration in the United States of America, T² Centres have expanded across the globe with chapters now present in many areas including Latin America, Eastern Europe and Africa. I wish to congratulate Tanzania, under the able leadership of the Tanzania T² Centre, for hosting a successful inaugural Africa Technology Transfer Conference in Arusha in 2001. South Africa has its work cut out in terms of maintaining the high standards set by the previous hosts, and in emphasising that the African Chapters of the Technology Transfer Centres should become unique in their approach to manipulating technology and its benefits to accelerate Africa's programmes to achieve the vision of a "Developed and Unified" Africa.

I wish to send a special word of thanks to the Province of KwaZulu-Natal under the leadership of my colleague, MEC Bheki Cele and his team for not only succeeding in bringing this all-important conference to South Africa, but also for their professionalism in organising this event. MEC Bheki Cele, your province in partnership with the South African National Roads Agency (SANRAL), the University of Stellenbosch and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has ensured that the T² Centres concept, only launched 10 years ago in South Africa, is entrenched in the research, technology and capacity development domains of our country. Knowledge has been imparted to students, capacity has been built in the transport sector and the subject matter has been advanced through experiments and research that is conducted at the various T² Centres of South Africa. I want to urge other parts of our country to embrace this concept and use it as a tool to bring about change in our communities and our economy.

Let us pause for a moment to consider what we mean by Technology and its Transfer. Transport is an input sector that underlies and drives activities of the economic growth sectors that have been identified by Government such as manufacturing, eco-tourism and service industries. In addition, it is a necessary element that enables the successful provision of social services such as health care, education and welfare to our communities. To successfully fulfil these critical roles, the Transport sector relies on its ability to continuously improve the quality of infrastructure, ensure that services are always “state-of-the-art” in nature, maintain the right balance between the use of mechanical and labour intensive methods, have the ability to generate employment and as well as

reduce the cost of provision of transport services. Core to the achievement of all these provisions is “Technology”, for instance:

- Road construction technology continues to advance from the pavement design methods, seal and resealing methods, condition survey equipment and road material recycling technologies;
- Rail passenger services will be transformed in years to come through innovations such as the Gautrain the rapid rail link to be constructed between Johannesburg, Tshwane and the Johannesburg International Airport, and the integrated ticketing systems that are being contemplated by the SARCC;
- The application, expansion and continuous improvement of labour intensive construction and maintenance technologies through programmes such as Zibambele, Gundo-Lashu, and Vukuzakhe among others; and
- The reduction of the cost of doing business in South Africa through the application of technology to improve inefficiencies in rail signalling and control systems, port cargo handling equipment, and planning and scheduling systems at transfer nodes such as Kingsrest and City Deep.

There is no doubt about Africa’s intentions of claiming the 21st century and fundamentally transforming the state of development of the continent in order to ensure that the quality of life of African communities and people is improved, and that Africa assumes its rightful place in global relations. The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) clearly articulates this vision of African Renaissance and calls for the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities and the individual countries to draw up sound and practical plans for implementation that

are driven by consistent and harmonised policies and strategies in order to integrate and grow individual and regional economies, increase Africa's trade share and ensure that social services reach the communities that need them.

Notwithstanding Africa's tireless lobbying and engagement of the global community for increased levels of investment in Africa in order to accelerate the rate of development of the continent, it is becoming increasingly clear that Africa will have to look within it for the requisite resources in order to achieve its growth and development targets. What does this mean? It means that:

- Africa needs to build and strengthen its “system of government”;
- Identify areas with acute skills shortages and initiate programmes to build the requisite capacity;
- Integrate planning, improve decision support systems, and optimise the allocation and use of limited financial resources;
- Establish measures to ensure good corporate governance, eliminate corruption, reduce inefficiencies;
- Pool resources to invest in infrastructure and services of regional and continental significance while ensuring alignment at country level; and
- Develop cutting edge technology and adopt existing technology, and ensure its transfer and manipulation to achieve socio-economic development goals.

In conclusion I wish to challenge the delegates of this conference to ensure that continuity prevails – let what was agreed in Arusha be the basis of further engagement. Let us add value to the hard work that has

been initiated. Let us share the best practice that has been developed since 2001 in the various T² Centres across Africa. Let us critically review current research initiatives to determine alignment with country, regional and continental objectives. Finally let us not lose sight of the targets we are trying to achieve in order to ensure that the capacities that we continue to build, the research we conduct and the technologies we develop are relevant and practical to enable the achievement of our goals within the timeframes that we have set.

I wish you a pleasant stay in the “Kingdom-of-the-Zulu” and hope that you will work hard to achieve the objectives of the conference while taking advantage of “Tourism Month” and “Proudly South African Week” here in South Africa.

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