

**SPEECH BY THE PREMIER OF KWAZULU-NATAL, HONOURABLE SIBUSISO
NDEBELE AT THE 2ND AFRICA TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER CONFERENCE**

PIETERMARITZBURG

20 SEPTEMBER 2005

Programme Director

The Mayor of Msunduzi Municipality, Councillor Hloni Zondi;

The Minister of Transport, Honourable Jeff Radebe;

The KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Transport, Honourable Bheki Cele;

Stakeholders in the transport sector;

Delegates to the conference;

Ladies and Gentlemen

Theme: "Transportation Technology Transfer for Africa's Renaissance".

On behalf of the people of KwaZulu-Natal, our government extends a warm welcome to the delegates attending this very important conference. I am sure that delegates have found our province and its people warm and welcoming. Indeed, we urge all of you to feel at home. The Province of KwaZulu-Natal is indeed everyone's home away from home.

It also is a pleasure for us as the Republic of South Africa, in general, and the province of KwaZulu-Natal, in particular, to host this conference. We are also pleased that this conference is hosted by the capital city of our province, Pietermaritzburg. Pietermaritzburg is a city rich in history of our people and I would urge delegates not to leave our country and our province without visiting monuments of our history found in this city.

Programme director, I am sure all of us, have at one time or another during the course of today used cars to get to our destinations. I, for one, drove to this conference. But, have we ever pondered the question where these cars, which have become indispensable prerequisites for quick and efficient travel, come from? Allow me, programme director, to go on a short journey about the evolution of cars.

Author **Mary Bellis** writes that:

The automobile, as we know it, was not invented in a single day by a single inventor. The history of the automobile reflects an evolution that took place worldwide. It is estimated that over 100,000 patents created the modern automobile.

The first steam device was invented by Hero of Alexandria, a Greek, before 300BC, but was never utilized as anything other than a toy. While designs had been created by various people in the meanwhile, the first practical steam engine was patented by James Watt, a Scottish inventor, in 1769. Steam engines are of various types but most are reciprocal piston or turbine devices.

The oldest wheel found in archaeological excavations was discovered in what was Mesopotamia and is believed to be over 5500 years old. The concepts of the modern vehicle are traceable back to Englishman Isaac Newton and Italian Leonardo da Vinci. The air bags were first produced by General Motors in 1973.

Clearly, programme director and delegates, no single country in the world can claim a right to having invented the first automobile. From Mesopotamia in the Middle East to Italy, England, Scotland, America and many others, inventors from all over the world have contributed to the evolution of automobiles. This attests to the fact that any invention worth mentioning is seldom the work of a single entity or country. It is always because of pooling together of technologies from various countries coupled with constant research and development that worthwhile inventions come about or are bettered. This conference, delegates, is about that – the creation of a prosperous world through transfer of technologies. The evolution of the automobile is a practical example of how effective transfer of technologies can contribute to the attainment of this goal. If anyone of these countries had chosen to withhold its expertise from the rest of the world, ours would indeed be a poorer world.

Today, we meet in an Africa that is free. Pointedly, we meet in a South Africa that has just entered its second decade of freedom. As much as we are a continent on the rise, we cannot run away from our

history, a history characterised by underdevelopment and neglect. Therefore, while we meet in an Africa that is free, we also meet in an Africa that is trying to catch up with the rest of the world particularly in the area of technology.

That is why we should keep in mind that our continent, in both its positive and negative aspects, is a product of colonialism. At the same time, we need to acknowledge what the developed world is currently doing in sharing its ideas and experiences with Africa with regards to technology.

Despite the appreciated efforts of countries from other continents, it is a fact that millions of people in Africa continue to live in poverty with no food, medicine, shelter and proper road infrastructure. It is for such reasons that the President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki, has pioneered the concept of an African Renaissance through the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

We want to ensure, through the implementation of this philosophy that past injustices and inequalities are eradicated and that Africa determines her own destiny. African Renaissance will bring about the rebirth, reawakening, revival, reconstruction and renewal of Africa.

In our campaign to reconstruct and develop Africa, existing and new challenges will gain a prominent profile and will require immediate prioritisation. One of these challenges is expedient service delivery in Africa that would culminate in the future building of our continent's morale that requires a collective and synergistic effort from all spheres.

Essential for the success of Africa's rebirth is the need to further entrench and strengthen democracy, to continue in our endeavour towards building a culture of human rights, to alleviate poverty, and to implement technology transfer strategies to improve the quality of life and rejuvenate a sense of pride in our Africanness.

In my view, the sharing of experiences and ideas on technology transfer means that the international world is ready to address some of the present imbalances, through the sharing of knowledge on technology and infrastructure development in transportation. However, we would indeed be averse to an outlook where the developing world would look at us as a basket case in technology transfer. While we expect those with modern infrastructure and expertise to impart their knowledge to the developing world, we feel that there is a lot that they can learn from us.

The sharing of information on technology transfer in transportation is extremely important, as transport is indeed a critical element of economic development. Our roads and bridges play a vital role in our transportation system as they link farms, small communities and busy urban centres by supporting and enhancing safety, commerce and quality of life for everyone.

This concept of technology transfer centres is in line with the South African Government's vision of skills development. It is gratifying to note that the technology transfer programme is a mechanism to transfer information and new technology from the research community to the user community. In working with and sharing information with the rest of the world, we will definitely benefit all parties by improving the transportation of goods and people in our different countries, resulting in a stronger global economy.

The first Technology Transfer Centre in South Africa was established in 1996 when the National Department of Transport signed an agreement with the US Federal Highway Administration. The centre is currently run by the South African National Roads Agency (SANRAL) on behalf of the Department of Transport. The second T² Centre was started at the Transportation division of the CSIR in 2000.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport signed a Memorandum of Understanding with FHWA in 2000 to start the first of the provincial T² Centres. It was envisaged at that stage that the KZN T² Centre would assist in expanding the T² Centre concept to other provinces.

The current dispensation requires citizens with unique skills, and the conference should provide a forum for exchange of experiences and ideas relevant to the transfer of skills thus achieving the objectives of an African Renaissance in theory and in practice.

Since its inception in 2000 the T² Centre of the KZN Department of Transport has established itself as a major provider of technology transfer services for the department and for external customers. Services provided by the T² Centre include: -

- Developing and facilitating technical training;
- Collaborating with external service providers to facilitate courses;
- Providing mentorship training to graduate engineers;
- Supporting additional maths and science classes for learners in disadvantaged schools;
- Supporting other activities aimed at encouraging the study of maths and science by high school learners;
- Providing experiential training to S3 Technikon students to enable them complete their studies;
- Carrying out and/or co-ordinating research on issues of interest to the department ;
- Managing departmental infrastructure system; and
- Managing the technical resource centre.

The legacy of apartheid and colonialism in Africa has resulted in historically disadvantaged communities who were poorly trained in subjects such as Mathematics and Science. This in turn has created a shortage of skilled transportation human resources in these communities. However, the present South African Government has implemented development plans that will ensure that there are well-trained people of all races in the various fields of transportation.

Our government recognises that a weak transport infrastructure is a deterrent to private business, commerce, access to health care, urban development and delivery of goods to previously disadvantaged communities. Indeed, our provincial government has highlighted lack of access as a characteristic of poverty of communities. We say a community is poor if it does not have proper transport infrastructure and means of communication like telephones, internet etc. This conference, therefore, cannot afford to be about academics and experts debating hypothetical and philosophical questions but should be about how we practically ensure that we better the lives of our people.

This conference must, therefore, come up with practical solutions to challenges that exist in transportation technology. Our government requires people with unique skills, skills that should help us attain our goal of

a non-sexist, non-racial, democratic and prosperous South Africa, Africa and the world. This conference should, therefore, provide a forum for exchange of experiences and ideas relevant to the transfer of skills thus achieving the objectives of an African Renaissance in theory and in practice.

This conference has also come at a time when South Africa and Africa prepare to host our first Soccer World Cup. We all know that a major prerequisite for a successful 2010 World Cup, is being able to deal with traffic congestion, as well as building road systems that will cope with the type of traffic volumes that will be experienced during the World Cup.

In my mind, there is no doubt that information sharing and education is pivotal to the provision of a balanced road network, particularly for the historically disadvantaged communities of South Africa and the rest of Africa. On the other hand, the rapid changes in technology and knowledge affect transportation professionals in practice. With these rapid changes, it is becoming necessary for transportation professionals to participate in refresher courses, retraining and continual educational programmes. Key to continual success is the advancement of the knowledge and skills of our work force.

Transportation theories support the need for advanced technology with the goal of building more and better roads in any country. For the transportation sector to function efficiently, developing countries must also participate in transportation technology transfer, as a means to address economic growth. To create efficient transport systems, it is important to have access to the most current scientific information.

In conclusion, I would like to say that by sharing technology with the rest of the world, especially developing countries, through technology transfer centres and conferences such as this, we will contribute towards the political and economic emancipation of not just a certain class of people, but all human beings.

I trust that this conference will also specifically address the many challenges faced by our rural communities pertaining to engineering, job-creation, road construction, maintenance, road safety and law enforcement, in a way that will benefit Africa and the rest of the developing world.

The world needs all of her people to become a better place. The example of the evolution of an automobile clearly shows that all countries of the world need to participate in its betterment. Technology transfer is, therefore, not an option but a necessity.

We must all strive to build an Africa and a global community that truly belongs to all.

I thank you