



**SPEECH NOTES FOR KZN TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND
LIAISON HON. WILLIES MCHUNU AT THE TAXI DRIVER GRADUATION
CEREMONY IN DURBAN ON 17 JULY 2010**

Programme Director, Mr Mzolo
Chairperson of SANTACO, Mr Mthembu;
TETA Coordinator, Mr Kgantsi
KZN Provincial Training Officer, Mr Kheswa
Representatives of SATAWU;
Provincial leadership of the Taxi Industry;
Members of the Taxi Industry;
Officials from various government departments;
Members of the Media;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is always encouraging when one gets invited to occasions such as this one that bears testimony to the passion the Taxi Industry has for growth, development and transformation. Many a time one has been to meetings with various bodies of the industry to resolve conflicts, something that has nearly convinced me that here I am dealing with hotheads only.

It is therefore a great honour for me to be part of this Taxi Driver Skills Development and Training Certificate ceremony. As Government, we have always emphasised the importance of a partnership with the taxi industry. Therefore, it is a sign of great maturity that this partnership today has brought these important results.

Today we are gathered to congratulate 31 Taxi drivers from KwaZulu-Natal Province on their successful participation in the most needed skills development and training project for the Taxi Industry. This training programme seeks to immensely contribute to safety on South African roads and improve on relations between taxi drivers and their customers, the passengers.

It will be remembered that in 2009 the National Department of Transport entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) with the Transport Education and Training Authority (TETA) to coordinate the implementation of the taxi driver training project with active support from organised labour – South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) and the taxi industry as represented by the South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO).

The goals of the project are clear and they can be summarised as follows:

- To facilitate the effective implementation of the training and development of the taxi industry;
- To ensure the long-term sustainability of the taxi industry through the provision of customised training programmes; and
- To effectively improve safety and quality of transport services through the training and development of drivers.

Now, what does all this tell us here? This alone tells us of the many positive things in the taxi industry that may not be communicated to the public since it is often rogue elements who steal the thunder as if they are the embodiment of this very important industry.

It means that it is high time we join hands in ensuring that we collectively deal with all the problems within the industry. Our duty is to ensure that areas of formalisation of the industry, conflict resolution and mediation, education and training, and economic empowerment are addressed vigorously.

It is our collective duty to support our Government, particularly the Transport Department, in its undertakings of saving lives and reducing road crashes on our roads.

We are compelled to do something for our people who, everyday, are praying to settle down to a life of freedom, security and comfort. Our people want to be able to assert their pride in the reconstruction of our province and the country. They want to travel in peace, so that when they go to and from their places of work, home, prayer, recreation and all other things in which public transport has become the lifeline of secure and comfortable commuting, they would be able to be safe. They do not want to be preoccupied with thoughts of a road accident that brings death and destruction or the bullying and rude attitudes of drivers and their assistants.

To all our drivers who are receiving certificates today, the message is clear. We have invested in you because we hold the view that you need to be ambassadors of proper and good behaviour on our roads. You are now sent out from here to help save as many lives as you can. The training you have received must mean that indeed we can count on you.

To the industry as a whole, I want to assure you that the intention of the government is to improve the industry to be better than before. We realize that in KwaZulu-Natal and in South Africa generally, we are still faced with a situation where previous town planning did not accommodate our public transport. This is a task that municipalities must respond to squarely in designing their public transport plans, infrastructure development, and land use policies.

In conclusion, I urge and encourage transport operators, to conduct their businesses with due care for the safety and security of the public and also ensure that the working conditions for their employees are better. Do not forget that your industry is the single biggest black economic empowerment sector as you transport over 60 percent of the country's population daily.

As government it is our duty to assist you and other entrepreneurs to prosper, but we cannot do it without your cooperation. There can be no turning back now – the sky is the limit.

I thank you