

REMARKS BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MR. WILLIES MCHUNU DURING THE NATIONAL TRANSPORT MONTH LAUNCH, 22nd SEPTEMBER 2011.

Programme Director;

The Honourable Minister Sibusiso Ndebele;

Members of National and Provincial Parliaments;

The CEO of SAMSA: Commander Tsietsi Mokhele;

Director General of the Department of Transport: Mr George Mahlalela;

National and Provincial Senior Government Officials;;

All stakeholders present;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Let me extend a special word of gratitude to all of you for having descended on our province of KwaZulu-Natal to officiate the national activities that will be undertaken during the 2011 Transport Month countrywide.

As the province of KwaZulu-Natal, we are privileged to be hosting this national launch for the second time in a row. We know that Mazalankosi, you decided to bring last year's launch to KwaMashu because a massive infrastructure project is underway in that township. Known as the Bridge City, this KwaMashu project which we celebrated last year includes the construction of a rail station that will service all public transport modes like taxis and buses.

Again this year, KwaZulu-Natal has the honor of hosting the launch of October Month – not because it is your home-town, but simply because it happened to coincide with a very important event that is also being held in this province, that is, the Maritime Skills Summit and World Maritime Day.

Programme Director, having seen the launch of the very first black-owned Santaco Airways recently, we hope that in the near future our black entrepreneurs will play a role in the maritime. We will see them starting to control and operate their very first cargo shipment operation.

We are pleased to see members of the taxi industry moving towards diverse investments, spreading their wings and growing as vital economic players. This is an essential development in the history of our public transport transformation process as it will free the taxi industry from the shackles of an unhealthy competition.

The province of KwaZulu-Natal has seen a decline in the level of violence in the taxi industry as the province's political leadership continue engaging the leadership of the taxi industry in fruitful and constructive dialogue, whilst law enforcement interventions go on.

Hence any constructive endeavour to open doors for taxi operators as entrepreneurs is highly welcome and I am convinced that all the provinces are firmly behind that.

To that effect, we as a province pledge ourselves to support all programmes brought to us by the National Department of Transport during this October Transport Month.

Programme Director, it is however very unfortunate indeed that when we have to be here today talking about ways of moving forward as a developing country, we still have to deal with the road carnage that continues to draw us back in the province and the country as a whole.

If one goes back and realize how, as Government and Transport Department in particular, we have led the way in the matters of road safety and transport, nobody would have thought that by 2011 more than 1080 people could lose their lives on our roads in just four months alone in this province.

This is according to the number of cases of culpable homicide recorded by SAPS on our road accidents.

To this end, we have developed a framework which has provided an opportunity to show a renewed direction on ways to achieve increased Road Safety outcomes and advocate a shared responsibility for Road Safety among road users, including government, businesses and the public.

We are presently implementing the recommendations that were made by delegates who took part in our road safety summit earlier this year. This was a platform where communities and various stakeholders had an opportunity of engaging with us on ideas, possible solutions and methods of curbing road carnage which continue to undermine the family support system as the bereaved lose their loved ones.

Programme Director, I am pleased to say that we have set up an Integrated Traffic Law Enforcement Committee (ITLEC) that is working towards the attainment of the goal of preventing road crashes and offences that lead to fatalities on our roads. The major role players in this initiative are the Provincial Department of Transport, EtheKwini Metro Police and the various Municipalities in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

This Committee is driving the integrated provincial traffic enforcement initiatives and programmes as well as engaging in continuous research aimed at finding new ways to curb the high levels of road accidents and fatalities.

At the end of the day, we want to see a sustained vigorous enforcement of traffic laws on our roads, including both the rural and urban areas, that is, townships and cities. We want to ensure that we focus our attention on road safety 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport is fully behind the call for a speed reduction from 120km/h to 100km/h on our roads. In fact, it was a coincidence that Minister Ndebele made it public when I had just commissioned the ITLEC to look into the possibilities of achieving this.

We have also come out in support of the National Prosecuting Authority's stance of charging a taxi driver with ten counts of murder following a fatal accident in July in Kokstad. Previously such a case would have been regarded as culpable homicide.

We say accidents are not accidental, but are often as a result of sheer carelessness and recklessness or even ignorance that is informed by under-preparedness to use the road.

Yesterday there was a misrepresentation of fact on radio about our position as the KZN Department of Transport in terms of factors that contribute to road crashes. We have always said that among these factors are un-roadworthy vehicles, drunk driving and speed.

Now, the radio presenter thought if speed is listed at last, it means we say speed is the least. But the fact is that we look at them holistically and they all have their own impact, and they are interrelated.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is important that each one of us show our commitment to road safety by supporting these campaigns. The latest accident which claimed the lives of ten people in KwaMbonambi is an echo of many such incidents that we feel are avoidable or preventable.

Government is making a clarion call to traffic law abiding citizens because safety on the road begins with you. Let us all agree that today as we launch Transport Month, we are reviving a partnership that will take us to the festive season and beyond

As we celebrate the broadening of opportunities in various transport modes, including the maritime industry, we must also reflect on the successes and the challenges that we face as a country in addressing the backlogs that were created by centuries of neglect by previous governments in so far as our road network is concerned.

In the case of our province, we have the African Renaissance Road Upgrading Programme (ARRUP) which is an ambitious road network development programme which provides openings for established and emerging contractors.

The Vukuzake emerging contractor programme continues to train and develop new entrepreneurs. These emerging contractors are driving the provision of the ever growing demand for access roads in the rural areas. The Zibambele road maintenance poverty alleviation programme which is affiliated to the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) is not only our Department's exemplary flagship programme, but it has become the country's frame of reference or national model.

With these words, on behalf of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, I take this opportunity to welcome you all. And as I indicated earlier, may this exercise be worthwhile in promoting the viability and user-friendly state as well as the safety of our country's transportation systems.

I thank you.