

SPEECH NOTES FOR KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MR WILLIES MCHUNU AT THE MEC'S SAPS SERVICE EXCELLENCE AWARDS CEREMONY ON TUESDAY, 22 MARCH 2011.

Programme Director;
Deputy Mayor of eThekweni;
Chairperson and Members of the Portfolio Committee;
Members of the Provincial Legislature;
Provincial Commissioner;
Head of Department;
Head of Metro Police;
ICD representative;
Business Against Crime;
Al Baraka Bank representative;
Faith-based organisations;
Departmental officials and police officers;
Distinguished guests;
Members of the media;
Ladies and gentlemen.

We are convening here this evening to celebrate and give honour to the work, dedication and selflessness demonstrated by our police officers from different police stations in the execution of their duties.

We are gathered here to demonstrate that we have been able as a collective to give meaning to the constitutional political responsibility that entitles provinces to monitor the police conduct, to oversee the effectiveness and efficiency of the police service, including receiving reports on the police service and to assess the effectiveness of visible policing, amongst other things.

Ladies and gentlemen, because of our full realisation of the negative and destructive impact crime has in the lives of our people, government has prioritised the fight against crime. This is one of the challenges we must confront without any compromise. We have to confront crime with courage, concentration and clarity of purpose in line with the resolution of the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster.

Our resolve to confront crime was given more meaning by the recent President Jacob Zuma's recent State of the Nation Address. The President made it clear that the fight against crime remains one of the country's priorities. He said, and I quote: "We will continue to prioritise crimes against women and

children. We will work with communities and other key stakeholders to deal with drug peddling and drug abuse which are tearing some communities”.

Furthermore, Programme Director, in his State of the Province address last month, our honourable Premier Dr Zweli Mkhize said, and I quote: “KwaZulu-Natal must be commended for reversing its history of unbridled violence and mayhem. The South African Police Service in our province has always had their hands full of extraordinary challenges. They have always had to go the extra mile for stability to be maintained”.

He continued to say: “Of late, you have seen and read of the police successes in busting many organized crime syndicates, even those that cross over from other provinces. The Police are sending a clear message to the criminals – that they have a war on their hands in that we are going to unite to defeat them in our province,” close quote.

It is on the basis of this that we continue with the Excellence Awards as an annual calendar event giving us the unique opportunity every year to focus our attention on giving the necessary recognition and praise to the brave men and women in blue. We acknowledge them for their daunting task because they always put their lives on the line just to ensure that peace and stability prevails. Everyday, they put their personal wellbeing on the line for the rest of us.

These men and women are in the forefront of the fight for the safety of our communities, for the protection of our homes, properties, businesses and for the security of our families, more especially our children and women.

Just think what would happen if they did not exist, if they were unwilling to answer the calls for help, if they did not stand between criminals and their victims. Surely these unsung heroes and heroines deserve our recognition, respect and praise for the work they do.

Programme director, ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered here to give the necessary accolades to those of us who deserve them.

The MEC's Excellence Awards were conceived with the objective of identifying and rewarding police stations for their outstanding service to the community, outstanding service to women and children who are at high risk of falling victim to crime, effective police-community relations, vision and innovation in all facets of crime prevention and law enforcement as well as optimal use of financial and human resources to improve performance, amongst others.

The evaluation processes undertaken by communities together with our departmental officials, assist us in assessing the performance of our police stations. The desired goal here is to maximise effective police visibility and enhance interaction and participation amongst local stakeholders. We aim to see how communities are mobilised and engaged in the fight against crime.

Our police stations must be in touch with local issues, structures and the communities. They must be seen to be working together in order to be able to seize the control of the streets from criminals. Their work and the manner in which they execute their activities should strive at making crime unfashionable and discourage all those who were looking up to the criminals as their idols.

A broad apprehension of the situation at grassroots level reveals that last year communities still had a challenge in terms of ensuring the existence of adequate structures to enable us to fight crime.

There are still some police stations in our province that are without or have malfunctioning community policing forums. We have therefore embarked on an ongoing vigorous campaign to establish or revive these structures so that the existing gap is not taken advantage of by criminals.

We all know that community policing forums form an integral part of the strategy to involve communities in an organised manner to take part in the fight against crime and ensuring peace and order.

On the other hand, ladies and gentlemen, we are already seeing results of our broader anti-crime strategy, called Building a United Front Against Crime, which seeks to rally communities behind the crime fighting cause. This programme uses Operation Hlasela as a vehicle to roll out the strategy throughout the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Operation Hlasela is impacting positively on the Criminal Justice System in that through mass community mobilisation, greater confidence is being built between the police and the community resulting in communities being more willing to give critical crime-related information to the police, much of which has led to the swift arrest of criminals.

We remain dedicated to ensuring that our hard-earned political freedom is not threatened by crime. We are hard at work to ensure that law and order, peace and stability is a reality and not a far fetched ideal. We need to continue to mobilise our communities to take a stand and lead the fight against crime and corruption.

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to thank those men and women in blue, past and present, the living and the dead alike, who have contributed to correcting the perception about this profession and those who are determined to turnaround the delivery of services.

There are many people who are not honoured here this evening but who deserve to be saluted. I encourage them all to persevere in their good work and to continue building the Police Force to be a better institution we are all proud of.

Finally, on behalf of our government, I would like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to all of you who have continuously remained true partners in the fight against crime and criminals.

The contribution of the Al Baraka Bank in the awards ceremony is not only encouraging but a clear sign that working together we can succeed in the fight against crime. We will continue to strengthen our partnership with different stakeholders in our multi-pronged strategy to defeat criminality.

I thank you.