

**MESSAGE OF SUPPORT BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT,
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MR WILLIES MCHUNU AT THE
PROVINCIAL COMMISSIONER'S GOOD PERFORMANCE AWARDS
CEREMONY ON TUESDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2011 AT UMHLANGA
ROCKS COASTLANDS HOTEL.**

Programme Director;
Chairperson and Members of the Portfolio Committee;
Provincial Commissioner;
Senior Management of SAPS;
ICD representative;
Business Against Crime;
Representatives of CPFs;
All police officers;
Distinguished guests;
Members of the media;
Ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation for allowing me to join you here today as you celebrate your achievements in the police service across the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

This event is the second gathering of this nature to be held at provincial level in KwaZulu-Natal this year. The first similar provincial initiative was the MEC's SAPS Service Excellence Awards which took place on the 22nd of March this year.

At that event, we commended our province of KwaZulu-Natal for reversing its history of unbridled violence and mayhem. We acknowledged the fact that the South African Police Service (SAPS) in our province has always had their hands full dealing with extraordinary challenges.

We further noted that there had been several police successes in busting many organized crime syndicates, even those that crossed over from other provinces.

We wish to reiterate today our message from the police to those involved in criminal activity out there – that they have a war on their hands and that we are going to unite to defeat them in our province.

Despite the challenges of losing our officers in the battlefield, again today, we are convened here 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.

Both these ceremonies, that is, the MEC's and Provincial Commissioner's Award Ceremonies respectively, as annual calendar events, give us a unique opportunity every year to accord the brave men and women in blue the necessary recognition and praise they truly deserve.

We acknowledge them for their daunting task of always having to put their lives on the line to ensure that peace and stability prevails in society. Everyday, they put their personal wellbeing on the line for the rest of us.

We all know that police officers 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.

Unfortunately, today's event comes at a time when the province and indeed the whole country, is facing very serious challenges as we continue to mourn the deaths of men and women in blue. It comes when it is becoming common to have news reports on police officers that have been slain.

It has been established that policing in this country is under threat because of violence directed at the police. The high number of murdered police officers recently indicates that the situation is out of hand.

On the 16th of August 2011, the province of KwaZulu-Natal hosted a Summit on Police Killings which was aimed at addressing the high number of attacks and the brutal killing of SAPS members. The summit was subsequent to the National Summit which was hosted by the National Minister of Police, the Honourable Mr Nathi Mthethwa, in July this year.

As government, we understand that this is not only a matter of urgency, but that of 'life and death'. We believe that a society in which the confidence of the police is undermined is far from being healthy and safe.

It was therefore befitting that we hosted the summit and engaged in a joint effort with all structures and interest groups in our communities to bring about the necessary decrease in these horrific numbers of police killings.

Following the deliberations at the Provincial Summit, we then announced a plan to reduce police murders. Among the most note-worthy measures are the following:

1. To protect our Protectors, the Police through a slogan that says: - "If it is to be, it is up to me".
2. Rebuild relations between the Police and our Communities.
3. We must investigate the strengthening of our Legislation - especially in so far as it relates to those who kill the police members.
4. Spouses/partners of Police to be work-shopped on their rights as well as what is expected conduct on their part.
5. We must find a way of identifying the rotten potatoes within the Police Force, and deal with them harshly, instead of condemning the whole force for the wrongs of a few amongst them.

6. Our Justice Crime Prevention and Security Cluster must work vigorously to ensure that the processes of the components of our Criminal Justice System, function effectively and optimally.
7. Our campaign against Police Killings must be taken to communities through rallies.
8. A ribbon symbolizing “Anti-Police Killing” must be formulated.
9. Media must be intensively used as a medium to educate the people on the processes of the Criminal Justice System. It must be discouraged from publicly displaying too much graphic material of the dead.
10. We must promote Campaigns in opposition to bail for Police killers as well as all other murderers.
11. We must all take full responsibility for the monitoring of the abuse of state vehicles by Police and others.
12. Training of Police and Community Leaders on Human Rights and Democratic values must be conceptualized.
13. All necessary steps to protect Police must be strengthened by the Department of Police and Government as a whole.

As we all probably know by now, Crime statistics for the period covering the 1st of April 2010 to the 31st of March 2011 were released by Minister Mthethwa on the 8th of September 2011. South Africa’s overall crime statistics have decreased for the second consecutive year. The total number of serious crimes decreased by 2.4% (or 50 400 cases).

KwaZulu-Natal saw decreases in all serious crime types though it performed badly in the areas of drug-related crime and commercial crime.

KwaMashu which had the highest murder rate two years ago has seen an enormous reduction in murders from 235 in the previous period to 78 in the latest report. Likewise other previous problematic Stations such as Umlazi, Pinetown, Inanda, and Phoenix, saw decreases in most crimes - with the exception of house robberies which more than doubled in Umlazi and saw significant increases in most areas.

Plessislaer has done badly with increases in murder, assault (GBH) and drug-related crime and unacceptably high levels of most other crime types, including sexual offences and attempted murders. Commercial (or White Collar crime) increased by 10.9% - continuing a worrying upward trend.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thought I should touch on this because it is one of the measures we use to see how we are progressing each year in the fight against crime and criminality.

It is because of our full realisation of the negative and destructive impact crime has in the lives of our people that 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.

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

We 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 turn around the police service delivery record.

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 Service 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 in the public and private sectors.

To all our stakeholders, your presence here is not only encouraging but is a clear sign that working together we can succeed in the fight against crime. We will continue to strengthen our partnership with all of you in our multi-pronged strategy to defeat criminality.

I thank you.